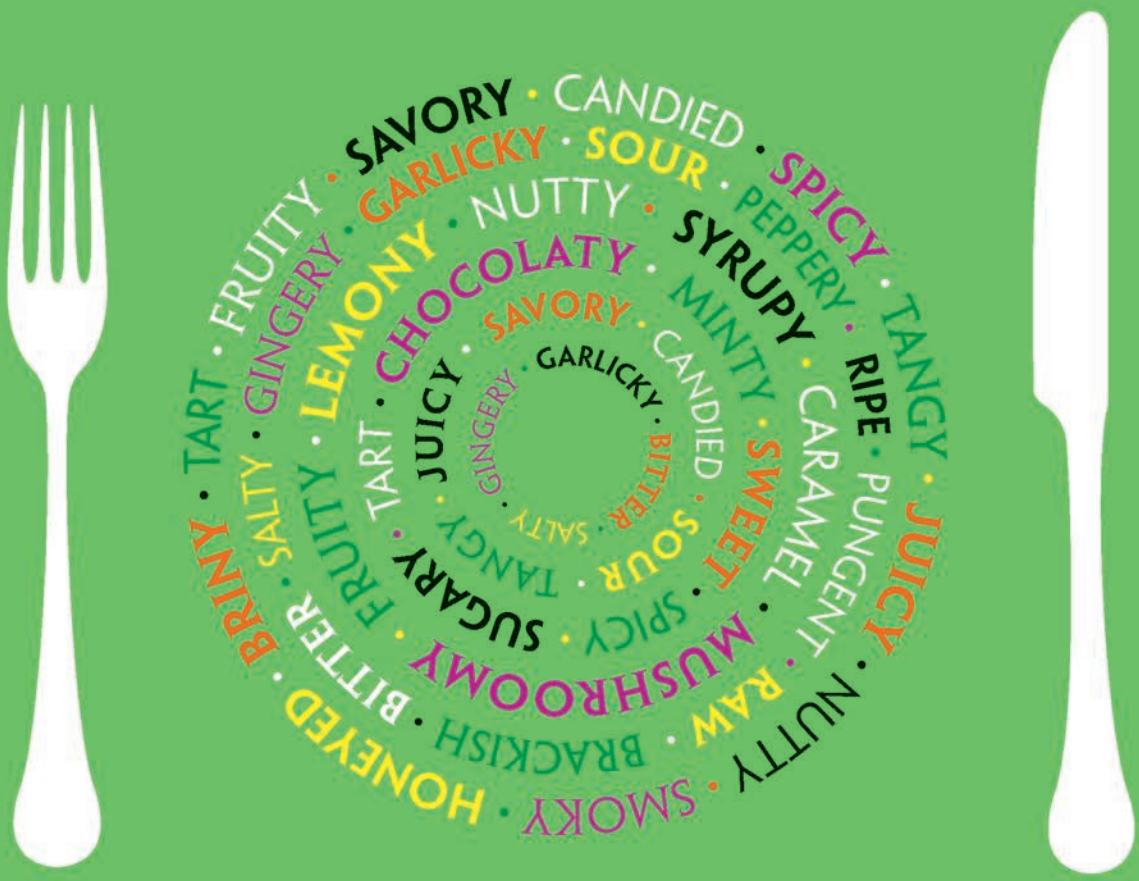
A TASTE FOR WRITING
COMPOSITION FOR CULINARIANS

SECOND EDITION



VIVIAN C. CADBURY

A TASTE FOR WRITING
COMPOSITION FOR CULINARIANS

VIVIAN C. CADBURY

A TASTE FOR WRITING
COMPOSITION FOR CULINARIANS

SECOND EDITION

VIVIAN C. CADBURY

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
THE CULINARY INSTITUTE OF AMERICA

CENGAGE Learning®

Australia • Brazil • Japan • Korea • Mexico • Singapore • Spain • United Kingdom • United States

A Taste for Writing: Composition for Culinarians, Second Edition
by Vivian C. Cadbury

Senior Vice President, GM Skills & Product Planning: Dawn Gerrain

Senior Product Manager: Jim Gish

Senior Director, Development: Marah Bellegarde

Senior Product Development Manager: Larry Main

Senior Content Developer: Anne Orgren

Product Assistant: Sarah Timm-Barker

Marketing Manager: Scott Chrysler

Senior Production Director: Wendy Troeger

Production Manager: Mark Bernard

Senior Content Project Manager: Glenn Castle

Senior Art Director: Bethany Casey

Media Developer: Debbie Bordeaux

Cover image(s): Fork and Knife image: ©iStockPhoto.com/linearcurves

Typography: Copyright © 2015 Cengage Learning®.

WCN: 02-200-208

Library of Congress Control Number: 2013956752

ISBN-13: 978-1-1332-7791-0

Cengage Learning
200 First Stamford Place, 4th Floor
Stamford, CT 06902
USA

Cengage Learning is a leading provider of customized learning solutions with office locations around the globe, including Singapore, the United Kingdom, Australia, Mexico, Brazil, and Japan. Locate your local office at:
www.cengage.com/global

Cengage Learning products are represented in Canada by Nelson Education, Ltd.

To learn more about Cengage Learning, visit **www.cengage.com**
Purchase any of our products at your local college store or at our preferred online store **www.cengagebrain.com**

Printed in the United States of America

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 17 16 15 14

CONTENTS

PREFACE

A Taste for Writing offers comprehensive coverage of topics in composition and grammar with a special interest in the analogy between writing and cooking. Imagine that you are going to cook potatoes, say a particularly elegant dish of creamy whipped mashed potatoes. Perhaps a few glistening rivulets of butter slip down the white slope of potato. When you slide your fork in, you leave an imprint, a ridge, like the crest of a meringue. You know there is no resemblance between the raw potatoes you begin with and that creamy swirl of goodness, yet you don't experience a moment of anxiety. Your focus is on a series of familiar steps rather than on what those steps are expected to produce. You have learned to have confidence in the *process.*

This book looks at writing from a similar perspective. Although you know that you need to end up with an essay or letter or report, you also know that it doesn't happen all at once; there are steps to go through and transformations that must take place. You may begin the process with a brainstormed list of ideas or a page of freewriting that bears no resemblance to the finished piece of writing, just as the unwashed raw potato bears no resemblance to a mound of creamy whipped mashed potatoes on a beautiful china plate. Then, through a series of physical and chemical transformations, both the raw potatoes and the raw ideas are "cooked" to perfection.

The culinary connection extends into the book's visual components as well. Many of the photographs and illustrations have food-related subjects, from chefs at work in the kitchen to front-of-the-house staff seating and serving their guests to the delicious food items themselves. The photographs include scenes from such popular films as *Ratatouille* and *Julie & Julia,* while the illustrations capture moments from *Kitchen Confidential* and *Chocolat.* In another interesting connection, the drawings were created by Rafael Hernandez, a working chef who's also a working cartoonist.

The photographs and illustrations also support another of the book's motifs—the value of storytelling. These images include stills from such favorites as *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone, The Blind Side,* and *The Hunger Games,* as well as from the television miniseries *Band of Brothers* and the original *Star Trek.* The illustrations represent such magical stories as *The Wizard of Oz* and *Star Wars;* literary classics like Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales,* Shakespeare's *Hamlet,* Hemingway's "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place," and Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven"; and newer works like *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* and *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo.*

This book encourages its audience to develop a taste for reading as well as for writing. Selections from the work of both student and professional writers, which exemplify points of composition in each chapter, are often food-related, from dining on Flying

Squirrel Noodles in Thailand and Bacalao in Alaska to cooking snails for a classical French chef and tasting chocolates for an English teacher, from the smell of coffee to the first taste of vichyssoise to a gargantuan mouthful of sandwich. Herman Melville offers a savory chowder from *Moby-Dick,* while Winnie-the-Pooh's A. A. Milne discourses on the glories of celery. "Tortillas," by artist, poet, and community leader José Antonio Burciaga, is a special gift, while five poems depict the ordinary activities of catching a fish, digging potatoes, picking blackberries, baking bread, and drinking a Coke in vivid and evocative detail.

As a classroom text, *A Taste for Writing* provides material for lecture and discussion and for independent reading, as well as activities, readings, and written assignments designed to help students understand concepts and practice skills. Instructors may follow the order of chapters as presented or devise a sequence that better suits their needs. For example, some chapters may be more appropriate as reference material, while others may be omitted altogether, according to the purpose and scope of the course. The instructor's manual offers a fuller discussion of these options and of ways to raise or lower the level of difficulty of the exercises and assignments. *A Taste for Writing* can be used in a high school or college course or as a reference book. Ultimately, it's meant for anyone who likes food and wants (or needs) to write.

NEW TO THE SECOND EDITION

The second edition of *A Taste for Writing* has been reorganized into three comprehensive units: Process, Patterns, and Presentation. The first unit breaks down the process of writing into more detail, including new chapters on developing ideas; planning your writing; working with paragraphs; reading various kinds of texts, including your own; and improving sentence fluency. The second unit begins with another new chapter, Finding Your Voice, while the chapters on persuasion and analysis have been extensively rewritten. The third unit gathers chapters on grammar and punctuation, with attention paid to clarifying the explanations and updating the exercises and illustrations.

New samples of both student and professional writing have been interwoven throughout the text of the second edition, with full-length essays at the end of the first seventeen chapters in a section called A Taste for Reading. The menu of inviting selections includes essays by seasoned food writers like John Thorne, Irena Chalmers, Tim Hayward, Monica Bhide, and Dara Moskowitz Grumdahl, as well as poems by award-winners Elizabeth Bishop, Martín Espada, Seamus Heaney, Yusef Komunyakaa, and Sharon Olds. The owners of the Canal House share a recipe for warm savoy cabbage salad, while a doctor weighs in on the intriguing similarities between chefs and surgeons. New samples of student writing, as well as favorites from the first edition, recount personal food experiences, argue for a sustainable approach to offal, and engage readers in literary analysis.

As part of the freshly updated design, the seventy new color photographs and fifty custom-drawn black-and-white illustrations give the book an appealing, modern look, while at the same time illustrating the concepts of the text. The vibrant color-coding of the chapter elements makes it easy to find exercises, review material, reading selections, and ideas for writing.

New teaching and learning resources—including a text-specific CourseMate website and an instructor companion website with revised instructor's manual, test bank, and lecture presentations—are available to support the second edition.

ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

PROCESS: CHAPTERS 1–9

The first nine chapters examine the processes of reading and writing in detail. Chapter 1, "Cooking Up Communication," summarizes the relationship between the writer, reader, purpose, text, and context using the famous "make my day" diner scene from Clint Eastwood's *Sudden Impact*. Chapter 2 offers a "recipe" for reading, including reading to revise your own writing. Chapter 3 reviews the writing process (often a messy affair, like peeling potatoes) and addresses what many writers find most difficult—getting started. Chapter 4 reviews different methods of developing ideas sometimes called "rhetorical modes." Chapters 5 and 6 offer guidance about planning and revising your writing, with special attention to paragraphs and transitions. Chapter 7 examines the framework of writing, the introduction and conclusion. Chapter 8 provides explanations and exercises on improving sentence fluency, while Chapter 9 looks at revising individual words.

PATTERNS: CHAPTERS 10–19

This unit begins with a chapter new to the second edition, "Finding Your Voice," which helps readers analyze the components of a writer's "voice," develop their own voices, and appreciate the role of voice in a personal essay. The remaining chapters expand on the modes or ways of developing an idea introduced in Chapter 4: narration (11), description (12), compare and contrast (13), process (14), and exemplification, definition, and cause and effect (15). Chapter 16 discusses strategies for persuasive writing, including accessible approaches to the Aristotelian concepts of *logos, ethos,* and *pathos.* Chapter 17 addresses skills needed to write about literature, including performing a close reading, planning a critical analysis essay, and using textual evidence.

Chapters 18 and 19 provide an introduction to research principles and methods, from finding and evaluating sources (18) to incorporating their information appropriately in your own writing (19). Chapter 19 also provides updated information about MLA (7th edition) and APA (6th edition) formats. A full-length annotated student research paper in MLA format appears in Appendix D.

PRESENTATION: CHAPTERS 20–31

This unit covers basic grammar and punctuation with a view toward improving editing and proofreading skills. Chapter 20 reviews the parts of speech, while Chapter 21 addresses basic sentence structure. The next three chapters examine common grammatical issues: sentence fragments (22), run-on sentences and comma splices (23), and subject–verb agreement (24). Chapter 25 explores additional aspects of verbs, one of the more complex parts of speech, followed by chapters on pronouns (26) and modifiers (27). Chapter 28 lays out the principles of parallel structure.

The final three chapters address aspects of proofreading, that is, checking the correctness of the spelling and punctuation. Chapter 29 outlines the importance of and process of proofreading, as well as providing information on spelling and commonly misused words. Chapters 30 and 31 review punctuation, with emphasis on the complexities of the comma.

APPENDICES

The four appendices include Spelling of Selected Culinary Terms, Commonly Misused Words, and an Annotated Research Paper. New to this edition, Types of Writing offers advice on composition in a variety of genres, including the basics of business writing.

SPECIAL FEATURES

CHAPTER EXERCISES AND ACTIVITIES

Each chapter features exercises designed to help students practice the concepts and skills presented in the text and concludes with a summary of its main points, Recipe for Review. The exercises may be used for group or individual work, in or out of class. Most of the exercises in Units 1 and 2 are found at the end of the chapter so as not to disrupt the flow of ideas. In Unit 3 the exercises are sprinkled through the text of each chapter in order that readers may practice each individual skill immediately. Unit 3 chapters also include a comprehensive quiz.

Units 1 and 2 (Process and Patterns) include full-length essays and poems at the end of each chapter under the heading A Taste for Reading. Questions about the reading follow each piece, while teaching ideas and additional questions and exercises about the reading are included in the instructor's manual. These two units also include Ideas for Writing, lists of topics connected to the chapter content that can be assigned as journal entries or polished into essays.

PROFESSIONAL AND STUDENT WRITING SAMPLES

Readers of the first edition of *A Taste for Writing* asked for additional models of professional writing, included here both as full-length, free-standing pieces and as

shorter samples within the text. (See New to the Second Edition earlier in the Preface.) Both professional and student writing is featured in A Taste for Reading at the end of Chapters 1–17, and each of these pieces is followed by questions about the reading that promote comprehension and reinforce chapter content.

The book's student writing comes from young men and women who attended the Culinary Institute of America between 2001 and 2013. These writers did not intend their essays for publication but were simply completing a class assignment. Some essays were written over a period of days or weeks, while others were composed in a testing situation within a time limit of ninety minutes. While I have edited the essays slightly, I do not present them as "perfect" but rather as "tasty": they are included to exemplify a particular point of composition, such as using sensory details or tying the conclusion to the introduction, and especially to model open and engaging communication.

I have also used student writing as the basis for some of the grammar chapter quizzes. Students will correct the grammar and word usage of texts written by their peers rather than by a teacher. In order to provide this more genuine, inviting environment for practice, I received permission from the writers to introduce specific types of errors—sentence fragments, for example—into their texts. I owe a special thank you to these students for allowing me to do so!

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

CourseMate CULINARY COURSEMATE

Culinary CourseMate is available with this text and includes

- an interactive eBook, with highlighting, note-taking, and search capabilities
- interactive learning tools, including quizzes, flashcards, games, and additional exercises.

CourseMate

Go to cengagebrain.com to access these resources, and look for this icon to find resources related to this text in Culinary CourseMate.

INSTRUCTOR COMPANION WEBSITE

The instructor companion website for this text, available at login.cengage.com, contains a revised instructor's manual, test bank, and lecture slides.

The instructor's manual explains the philosophy behind this textbook and offers both general suggestions for teaching and specific hints and supplemental activities for each chapter. In addition, the manual provides options for a course syllabus and outlines methods of assessing students' achievement on individual papers and progress in

the course. The manual describes approaches to journal writing and peer review, while appendices contain reproducible handouts related to revision and editing.

The manual then provides an overview of each chapter, noting especially any successes or challenges this author has encountered in teaching the material. Ideas for classroom activities include questions for discussion, often based on readings from this book or on specific film clips; topics for supplementary reading and research; and suggestions for group activities, including the use of manipulatives. Finally, the manual offers useful notes on the figures in the text, as well as answer keys for and comments on the chapter exercises.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In reflecting on all who helped make this book possible, I think first of my own early teachers: Florence Stein at the William H. Ray School in Chicago, Dick Mullen and David Bourns at Oakwood Friends School in Poughkeepsie, and from the University of Illinois at Chicago, Moreen Jordan, Dan Lindley, Mary Carruthers, and Gloria G. Fromm. I also want to acknowledge my students, who have taught me a great deal about teaching and writing over the years, and especially those at the Culinary Institute of America, many of whom generously contributed their work here.

I am enormously appreciative of the support of present and former colleagues at the Culinary Institute of America, including John Ahern, Bonnie Bogush, Leigha Butler, Anthony Chando, Raimundo Gaby, Anne Henry, Richard Horvath, Vincenzo Lauria, Claire Mathey, Amanda Vladick, Adam Williams, and Stephen Wilson. A special acknowledgement is owed to Marjorie Livingston, who suggested the title *A Taste for Writing*, and to Tim Ryan, who proposed the term *Culinarians.* I am indebted to Sharon Zraly, Kathy Merget, and Denise Bauer for their initial encouragement and to Sue Cussen, Nathalie Fischer, and Bruce Hillenbrand for their guidance with the first edition.

I am profoundly grateful to those at Cengage Learning who believed in *A Taste for Writing*, particularly Jim Gish, Sandy Clark, and Kristin McNary. Many, many thanks are due to Nicole Calisi and Anne Orgren, my patient project managers, to Alexandra Ricciardi for her invaluable assistance with permissions, and to Bethany Casey, whose design brought the book to life, as well as to Glenn Castle, Sarah Timm, and the rest of the Cengage team.

The marvelous illustrations were created for this edition by Rafael Hernandez, and I'm delighted with the playful energy they bring to the text. Rafael was born in Puerto Rico, raised half there, half in the Bronx, and has been drawing since early childhood. A digital art hobbyist and freelance artist, he is also a culinary graduate and professional cook. Rafael lives in Ohio with his wife Sarah and their two children.

For permission to reprint their wonderful essays and poems, I gratefully acknowledge the following: "A Question of Taste: It's Not Easy Accepting Who Gets to Lick the Spoon" by Monica Bhide. Copyright © 2005 by Monica Bhide. Used by permission of the author. Excerpt from *Kitchen Confidential: Adventures in the Culinary Underbelly* by Anthony Bourdain. Copyright © 2000 by Anthony Bourdain. Reprinted by permission of Bloomsbury USA. "Tortillas" by José Antonio Burciaga. Originally titled "I Remember Masa" and published in *Weedee Peepo,* 1988. Courtesy of University of

Texas – Pan American Press. "The Fish" from THE COMPLETE POEMS 1927–1979 by Elizabeth Bishop. Copyright © 1979, 1983 by Alice Helen Methfessel. Reprinted by permission of Farrar, Straus and Giroux, LLC. Introduction to *Food Jobs: 150 Great Jobs for Culinary Students, Career Changers and Food Lovers* by Irena Chalmers. Copyright © 2008 by Irena Chalmers. Used by permission of the author. "Everyone's a Critic" by Ike DeLorenzo. Published in *The Boston Globe,* June 2, 2010. Used by permission of the author. "Beyond Clogs, and White Coats" by Karen M. Devon, MD. Originally published as "The chef and surgeon have much in common" at *KevinMD.com,* November 2, 2012. Used by permission of the author. "Coca-Cola and Coco Frio" from CITY OF COUGHING AND DEAD RADIATORS by Martín Espada. Copyright © 1993 by Martín Espada. Used by permission of W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. Excerpts from Maxine Hairston's "Not All Errors Are Created Equal" from *College English* 43.8 (1981): 794-806. Copyright 1981 by the National Council of Teachers of English. Reprinted with permission. "Too Much of a Mouthful" by Tim Hayward. Copyright Guardian News & Media Ltd 2009. Used by permission. "Digging" from OPENED GROUND: SELECTED POEMS 1966–1996 by Seamus Heaney. Copyright © 1998 by Seamus Heaney. Reprinted by permission of Farrar, Straus and Giroux, LLC, and of Faber and Faber Ltd. "Warm Savoy Cabbage Salad" from *Canal House Cooking, Volume No. 5* by Christopher Hirsheimer & Melissa Hamilton. Copyright © 2010 by Christopher Hirsheimer & Melissa Hamilton. Used by permission. "Blackberries" from *Pleasure Dome: New and Selected Poems* © 2001 by Yusef Komunyakaa. Reprinted by permission of Wesleyan University Press. "How to Address Obesity in a Fat-Phobic Society" by Courtney E. Martin. Used by permission of the author. "Smell the Coffee" by Dara Moskowitz Grumdahl. First published in *City Pages*, a Voice Media Group publication, October 27, 1999. Used by permission. "Bread" from THE DEAD & THE LIVING by Sharon Olds, copyright © 1977 by Sharon Olds. Used by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, an imprint of the Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, a division of Random House LLC. All rights reserved. "The Cadence of Great Writing" by Sean Savoie. Used by permission of the author. "One Knife, One Pot" from POT ON THE FIRE: FURTHER CONFESSIONS OF A RENEGADE COOK by John Thorne. Copyright © 1999, 2000 by John Thorne. This version as originally printed in Gourmet magazine. Reprinted by permission of North Point Press, a division of Farrar, Straus and Giroux, LLC. I am also indebted to Sara Bogush, Phillip Lopate, Kate Posey, Dr. Christos Vasilikiotis, and the Greenpeace Environmental Trust for permission to quote from their work.

In writing the second edition, I have once again been blessed by the support and encouragement of friends and family, particularly my mother's. Thank you!

Vivian C. Cadbury
August 2013

The author and Cengage Learning would like to thank the following reviewers:

For the second edition: Michele Bush, Western Maricopa Education Center, Glendale, Arizona; Grady Noland, Louisiana Culinary Institute, Baton Rouge; David Blackmon, Chicago Public Schools; and Richard Horvath, The Culinary Institute of America, Hyde Park, NY.

For the first edition: Michael F. Courteau, The Art Institutes International Minnesota (Minneapolis); Jo Nell Farrar, San Jacinto College Central, Pasadena, TX; Stephen C. Fernald, Lake Tahoe Community College, South Lake Tahoe, CA; Richard Horvath, The Culinary Institute of America, Hyde Park, NY; Nancy McGee, Macomb Community College, Warren, MI; John Miller, The Art Institute of New York City, New York, NY; James W. Paul II, MS, CCE, FMP, University of Nebraska at Kearney; Laima Rastenis, Cooking and Hospitality Institute of Chicago; Wayne Smith, Mesa State College, Grand Junction, CO; Lance Sparks, Lane Community College, Eugene, OR; Jorge de la Torre, Johnson & Wales University, Denver, CO; and Sharon Zraly, The Culinary Institute of America, Hyde Park, NY.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Vivian C. Cadbury has over twenty years' experience as an instructor at both the high school and college levels. In 2001 she began teaching at the Culinary Institute of America, where—not surprisingly—her students shared an intense passion for food. What *was* surprising were the rich connections between cooking and writing: finding the freshest raw ideas and cooking them up into an essay, seasoning with the right words and "plating" with punctuation. Exploring these connections, both literally and metaphorically, proved effective in the classroom and led to the writing of this book, first published in 2007.

In addition, the author has presented at national conferences, including the Conference on College Composition and Communication (2004, 2007, 2011), the National Association for Developmental Education (2008), and the Association for Career and Technical Education (2012). In 2008 the author's poster presentation on *A Taste for Writing* won the People's Choice Award at the Food Educators' Network International (FENI) Annual Summit. At the 2009 FENI Summit, she conducted a half-day workshop on teaching writing, led a roundtable discussion on improving study skills, and was one of six panelists addressing current trends in culinary education.

Professor Cadbury earned a bachelor's degree in English from the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) and completed the requirements for certification in grades 7–12. During her student teaching at Lane Technical High School in Chicago, she was interviewed with her class on Studs Terkel's radio program, which can be heard over the Internet at *Studs Terkel: Conversations with America*. As a graduate student at UIC, she specialized in the teaching of English and composition before completing her master's degree in English literature. She also studied for two years at Oxford University in England.

INTRODUCTION: RECIPE FOR WRITING

Food has never been more popular in the United States than now in the twenty-first century, and neither has food writing. The number of students in culinary programs continues to grow, along with the country's appetite for cookbooks and restaurant reviews, articles on nutrition or sustainability, and stories about satisfying hungers both physical and emotional.

Written communication is addressed to a particular audience for a particular purpose and, to be effective, is written in a style appropriate to both. In this way it can be compared to preparing and serving food. Particular eaters have particular purposes for eating, for example, to fill up, to get a healthy diet, to celebrate a special occasion. Various types of restaurants are designed to serve these purposes: the fast food restaurant, the family-style diner, the fine dining establishment. Writing, too, takes various forms, such as stories, letters, and essays. Further, just as we sometimes cook just for ourselves, we sometimes write for ourselves alone—perhaps in a journal, perhaps in a letter we didn't intend to mail.

> Writing is a therapy. It's a way to take things out of your system. Watching those thoughts come out of your brain and onto a piece of paper is like taking a shower and feeling all the dirt wash away. Once I was really mad at someone who had hurt me badly, so I grabbed a piece of paper and a pen and started writing, nothing grammatically correct, just swearing on a blank sheet. When I finished, I went to the kitchen, turned the stove on, and set the paper on fire to let it burn. I felt so good afterwards without having to talk to anyone. Writing is great therapy.
>
> —**Gerardo Vela Meza**, student writer

Writing is also a way of thinking. Writing doesn't just *record* our thoughts—it actually stimulates *new* ideas and insights.

> "Writing is thinking" means to me that we go through a whole thinking process as we write about something. If we pick any topic we want to extend our thinking about, we should just start writing about it. We can find ourselves with whole new ideas about it when we are done writing. Writing can take us places we don't expect to go. If we are having a

hard time thinking about something, we should start writing about it. As we write, we can encounter our most deep and hidden thoughts about the topic. We can realize things we never thought out brains held.

—**Idan Bitton**, student writer

Writing can reflect and develop our thoughts, and it can communicate those thoughts to others. Writing can also be a form of therapy or entertainment. But it isn't easy. Although we may have plenty of ideas, we can't always get them down on paper. Sometimes we have no ideas at all and stare helplessly at a blank sheet, unable to write a single word. In this book we will look at techniques intended to help with these very problems—how to find out what we think and how to write it clearly. Our skills will improve with experience and coaching, and ideally our self-assurance will grow as well. In the following journal excerpt, a student notes a change in her attitude.

Looking back to my past classes, I never enjoyed writing because I thought I could never hear my own voice. But now with all this practice, I am able to write a paper on whatever subject with confidence and pride. I know how to proofread it and what errors I am looking for, and I can correct them without doubting myself.

—**Astrid Sierra**, student writer

It looks like this cook has developed a taste for writing.

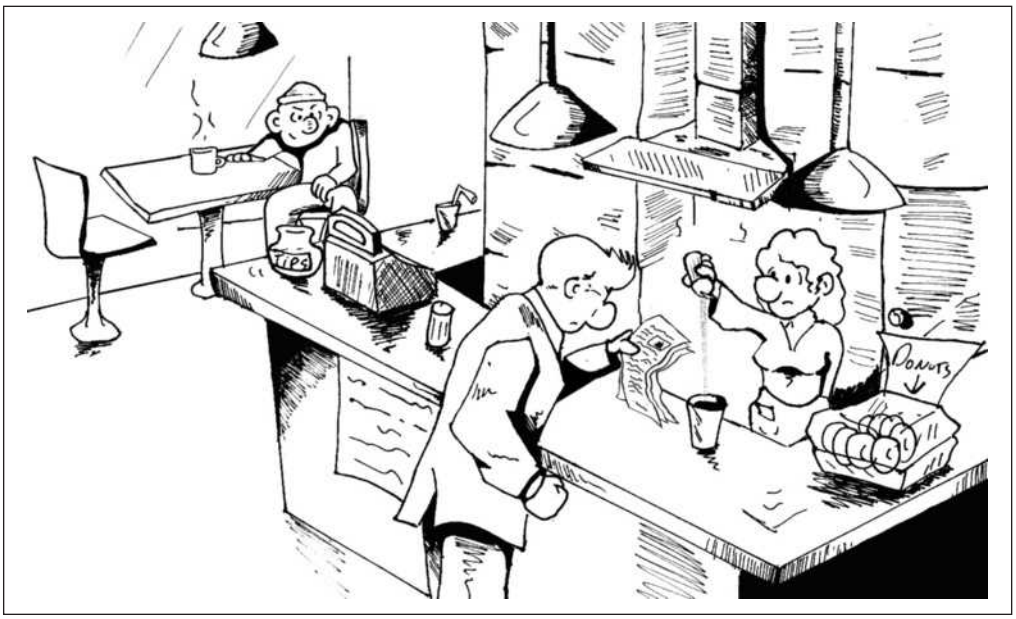
"I could never hear my own voice," she writes. No wonder she had no taste for writing! With practice, however, she begins to feel "confidence and pride" in her papers, just as she has felt confidence and pride in her cooking.

This textbook was designed for culinarians, for those who take pride in the kitchen and its processes. And, surprisingly, the process of cooking has some intriguing parallels with the process of writing.[1] Both cooking and writing take certain ingredients and turn them into something new. Both can be messy at times, with pots and potato peels piling up in the sink, or reams of rough drafts littering the desk. One culinary student had this to say about the similarities between writing and cooking:

> These similarities include the need to pay acute attention to detail, the certainty that only hard work will result in assured success, the need to train, study, practice, and do research, and the importance of being able to work under pressure. Other somewhat more subtle similarities exist: both pursuits involve simplicity of tools and equipment, both rely on a foundation of tradition passed along through literature, and both are vitally dependent on criticism. . . . To be successful, the professional cook and the professional writer must acknowledge [their rich] traditions while striving to be creative, thereby standing out in similarly competitive fields of endeavor.
>
> —**Robert A. Hannon**, student writer

This book asks its readers to "train, study, [and] practice" and to be open, thoughtful, and creative in putting their ideas on paper. I am very proud of the students who have done just that, some of whose writing appears in these pages. Whether or not these culinarians enjoyed the composition process, they learned to appreciate its difficulties and, usually, its rewards. They developed a taste for writing.

UNIT 1
PROCESS



CHAPTER 1
COOKING UP COMMUNICATION

By the end of this chapter, you should begin to . . .

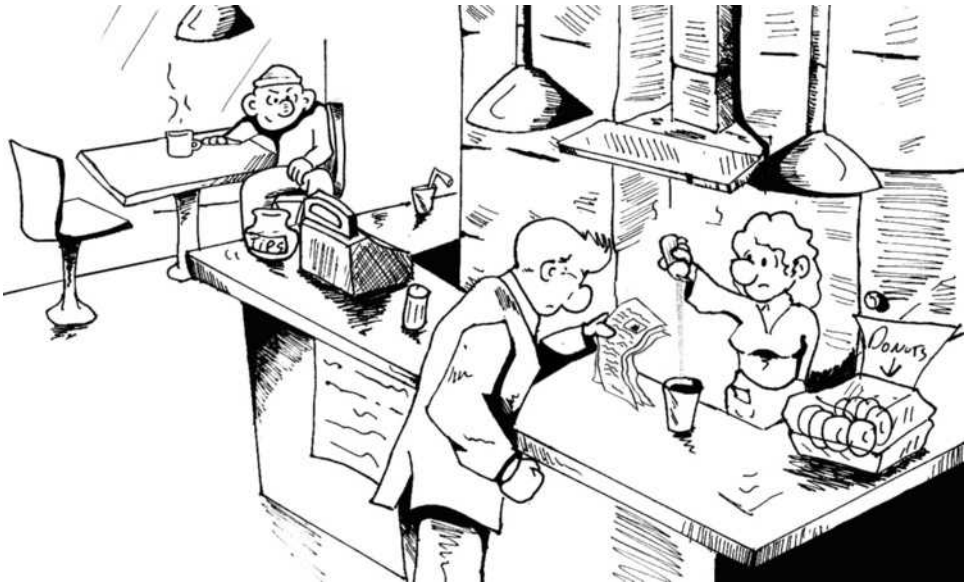
- think about what makes communication effective;
- recognize the parts of communication and the impact of time and place in shaping it;
- identify one or more purposes for writing;
- explore the relationship between speaking and writing; and
- think about what makes writing effective.

Communication is about sharing your thoughts and feelings with someone else, trying to move an idea from your brain into another's. Writing is one type of communication, but it is not the only kind, nor is it necessarily the most effective kind for every situation. *Effective* communication requires taking into account the audience, time and place, and purpose for communicating, and choosing a method accordingly. Depending on these factors, we might choose to communicate in one or more of the following ways: pictures, diagrams, body language, facial expressions, painting, sculpture, music, speech, writing, or, in some cases, food.

A CUP OF COFFEE

A dramatic example of the need to communicate effectively occurs in *Sudden Impact*, the fourth film in the series about Dirty Harry Callahan, the outspoken, rule-bending San Francisco detective played by Clint Eastwood. A judge has just reprimanded Harry for searching a car without a proper warrant, and the case has been dismissed. Filled with indignation, Harry heads for his favorite diner to get a cup of coffee. He's looking down at his newspaper as he enters the diner and doesn't notice the uneasy expressions on the faces of the waitress, the cook, and some of the customers—though we in the audience see them. As he remains absorbed in the paper, the waitress, Loretta, puts the coffee cup on the counter and begins to pour in sugar from the glass jar. She pours and she pours, all the time glancing nervously up at Harry and then around the diner.

Figure 1.1 Loretta sends a message through the cup of coffee.



On and on she pours, while the audience begins to chuckle and Harry remains oblivious (Figure 1.1). Finally she stops, and Harry takes the cup and walks out the door. Still reading the paper, he takes a few steps, sips the coffee—and spits it out. He looks back at the door of the café, and someone inside turns the "Open" sign to "Closed."

As it turns out, there is a robbery in progress in the diner, and Harry has gone in and out again without noticing a thing. But the coffee gets his attention. Without saying a word, and without attracting the attention of the three men holding the customers at gunpoint, Loretta has communicated very effectively. Harry understands the message and returns to the diner to stop the robbery. And when Harry stares down the barrel of the gun, the suspect understands that Harry will shoot. He doesn't even need to hear the famous lines. The expression on Clint Eastwood's face speaks more clearly than his verbal command. The coffee wasn't telepathic, but people are clever and effective communicators without words.

Communication can literally be a matter of life and death. Had Loretta not been able to communicate successfully with Callahan, the scene in the diner would have ended differently—with a robbery, certainly, and perhaps with the loss of civilian lives. Let's consider *why* Loretta's communication was successful. She had a purpose for communicating, one that she cared about, and she knew something about her audience. She was also aware of the time, that is, the urgent need to get her message across immediately, and of the place, the diner. So she chose a *form* of communication (filling up his coffee with sugar) that she knew would tell Callahan that something was wrong. Because she knew her audience, she was able to manipulate his expectation (that his coffee would be unsweetened) to get her message across. At the same time, she was able

to evade the notice of the robbers, who would be unlikely to suspect that she was using sugar to communicate with the cop. If anything, they would expect her to say something or to write something, if she dared at all to disobey their orders. By not speaking or writing to Callahan, she communicated (falsely) to the robbers that she was following their instructions.

Although in this book we will be concerned with words rather than coffee, we'll need the same ingredients for successful communication: a "speaker," someone with something to say; an audience; and a message or "text" that is shaped by the writer's understanding of its purpose and context (that is, time and place).

MAPPING OUT COMMUNICATION

Loretta was able to save lives that day at the diner because she knew whom she was dealing with, and she chose a method of communication that fit the audience, as well as the time and place. Different audiences will have different backgrounds, needs, and interests. Understanding the audience—and shaping the message to meet its expectations—is an essential ingredient of effective communication. Would your succulent filet mignon be a success with a vegetarian? Would your scrumptious white chocolate macadamia nut cookies be a treat for someone with a nut allergy?

We already know a lot about differences between audiences. When you were growing up, weren't there some friends or family members who were more likely to give you money for ice cream, while others could be counted on to listen sympathetically to your complaint about a teacher at school? Discovering how to "work" an audience to achieve your purpose—acquiring the ice cream, or the sympathetic ear—is an important step in developing your communication skills.

Think about the attention a restaurant pays to its audience. Entrepreneurs try to predict who would be interested in and able to afford to eat at their new venue, and they often do very complete studies of the demographics of the target area. Managers of existing restaurants must also be very aware of their audience—without customers, the restaurant will not survive. In order to meet the expectations of different audiences, managers will make different decisions about the food and service they provide. Let's look at two examples.

Imagine that the first restaurant is a successful yet humble family diner in a suburban setting, while the second is an ambitious, high-end establishment located in a major city. Now suppose each restaurant offered a pasta and cheese entrée. Would the menu descriptions be similar? It's unlikely. The customers at the diner expect basic food items, solid and familiar, with a homemade feel, items like a Classic Mac & Cheese. We often see family names in diner menu descriptions: Grandma's Chocolate Chip Cookies, Uncle Bob's BBQ Ribs. Customers at the trendy urban restaurant, on the other hand, expect more details in their menu descriptions, including specific ingredients that are out of the ordinary, such as Quattro Formaggio Macaroni: Fontina, mild cheddar, mozzarella,

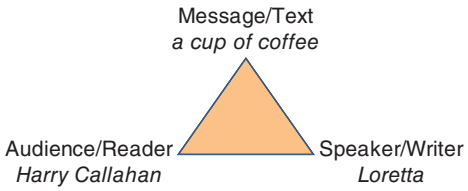
and smoked gouda sauce over house-made pasta. There's no right or wrong here—just effective communication with two different audiences.

Sometimes when we're writing, we forget about the audience altogether. Out of sight, out of mind, they say. Yet in the same way that restaurants try to meet the expectations of their customers with their menu descriptions, writers are wise to think carefully about who their readers might be and to anticipate what their readers will expect from them. In terms of content, for example, we want to provide details and examples that will make sense to our particular readers, and we want to use a style or level of formality that is appropriate for the audience and for the occasion. If we're writing an email to a good friend, we unconsciously use a vocabulary she can understand, and we probably don't have to be as careful about grammar and punctuation as we would be in writing an essay for English class. A cell phone text might make use of specialized acronyms, such as BTW or TTYL, that would be understood by one audience (friends) but not another (grandparents). College professors and business professionals, on the other hand, expect that we will use the conventions of standard written English in terms of word choice, grammar, and punctuation.

The effectiveness of communication also depends upon the choice of "text" or method. Sometimes a look is most effective—has your mother ever glared at you when you tracked mud onto her freshly mopped kitchen floor? At other times a conversation works best, for example, when explaining why you didn't do your homework. In terms of written communication, we also have choices. Shall we send a text or an email? Put a letter in the United States mail? Write an essay or a report?

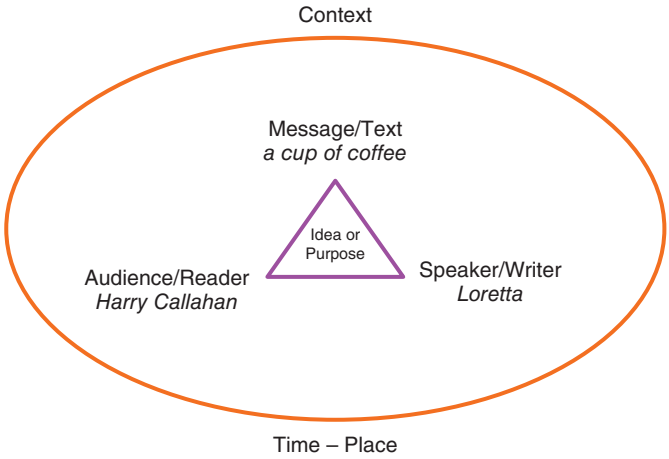
Finally, communication takes place most effectively if it is suited to the time and place, that is, the situation or context. Have you ever tried to say something and been hushed with a "This isn't the time" or "This isn't the place"? If you wanted to have a serious conversation about your career plans with a friend or mentor, you probably wouldn't choose to bring it up in the middle of the Super Bowl or five minutes before you had to leave the meeting. Instead, you would wait until both of you had time to talk and were in a place that was private and quiet enough.

The complex parts of communication are sometimes presented as a triangle illustrating the relationship between the speaker (writer), the message (text), and the audience (reader). Because these three parts are so closely interrelated, they are often depicted as the points of a triangle.



In *Sudden Impact*, for example, the "speaker" (Loretta) sent a message (sugar in the coffee) to an audience (police detective Harry Callahan). The triangle shape indicates that each part is influenced by the other two. Remember also that Loretta's decisions about *how* and *when* to communicate were influenced by the time and place, and by a secondary audience (the robbers) for whom she had quite a different message ("I'm not telling the cop anything"). Sometimes these additional factors—the context—appear on a line circling the triangle. Finally, the idea or purpose behind the communication can be placed in the center of the triangle.

Figure 1.2 Mapping Out Communication



WRITING WITH A PURPOSE

We've said that communication of any kind generally means moving an idea from our brain to someone else's brain. However, *why* we share our thoughts—that is, the **purpose** of our communication—varies widely. In writing an email to a friend, for example, our purpose may be to make dinner plans, or to ask a favor, or to share a funny story. Or we may write letters with the purpose of carrying out business, such as applying for a job or a scholarship. Sometimes our writing is entirely personal, for example, a journal entry or a poem. Writing is also part of many school assignments and as such reflects the *teacher's* purpose: to expand students' knowledge through research, deepen their thinking through analysis, and/or improve their written communication skills through practice.

The various reasons we might have to share our thoughts and feelings are often placed into one or more of the following three categories**:** to inform, to persuade, to entertain. Of course, your purpose is usually quite specific, for example, to write an informative essay on the Bill of Rights for a history class or to convince your credit card company to waive the late payment fee this month or to liven up a boring vocabulary assignment with outrageous sentences. Are you trying to pass on information about how to lower the fat content of a particular dish by submitting an article for publication in a magazine? Do you want your boss to put your new dish on the menu, or are you trying to persuade your instructor to give you an extension on a deadline? Are you just trying to tell a funny story?

As you plan a new piece of writing, you will begin to shape it depending on your purpose and how you might best achieve that purpose with a particular audience at a particular time and place. Purpose is important because our reason for writing will

influence our choices about content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and punctuation. If your story is about a narrow escape with a hot saucepan, for example, your essay might have the purpose of informing your readers about safety as well as entertaining them with your antics in the kitchen. If your readers have restaurant experience, you might spice up your prose with a little culinary slang: "I was weeded that night!" If not, your tone might be more serious: "Second-degree burns require immediate medical attention."

Let's try another topic: foraging for chanterelle mushrooms. *MykoWeb* ("California Fungi") offers straightforward information about chanterelles and also about how to distinguish the true ones from the "false":

> This much sought-after edible is recognized by a fleshy, yellow, vase-shaped, fruiting body, wavy margin, and shallow, ridge-like gills that are conspicuously decurrent. . . . Collectors should be aware that other yellow mushrooms are occasionally mistaken for the chanterelle, notably *Hygrophoropsis aurantiaca* (false chanterelle) . . . a less fleshy, buff to orangish, probably edible species that grows on rotting wood or wood chips.

The tone (or attitude) is factual, and the vocabulary is specialized. Sometimes there is an additional reason for giving factual information, for example, to prevent accidental poisoning. In the following excerpt, the Missouri Department of Conservation lays out its purpose at the beginning:

> The purpose of this article is twofold: to help you identify a number of safe, edible wild mushrooms while avoiding mushroom poisoning, and to introduce you to the gentle sport of mushroom hunting, which among other things is a fine excuse to walk in the woods.

The article goes on to provide descriptive details that distinguish the two mushrooms. The tone is also factual, but here providing information has a higher purpose: to help readers recognize danger and persuade them to avoid it. The element of persuasion is present in the second purpose as well—to encourage the reader to participate in "the gentle sport of mushroom hunting."

© FotograFFF/ShutterStock.com

Chanterelles in the Woods

A third example is pure entertainment. We don't have enough information to identify the toxic "false chanterelle," nor does the author attempt to persuade us that mushrooms are too dangerous to eat. But the rich description and humorous, conversational tone of Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma* (285–286) make this passage tasty:

Hiking in the Berkeley Hills one afternoon in January I noticed a narrow shady path dropping off the main trail into the woods, and I followed it down into a grove of big oaks and bay laurel trees. I'd read that chanterelles came up this time of year around old live oak trees, so I kept an eye out. The only place I'd seen a chanterelle before was over pasta or in the market, but I knew I was looking for a yellowish-orange and thickly built trumpet. I scanned the leaf litter around a couple of oaks but saw nothing. Just when I'd given up and turned to head back, however, I noticed a bright, yolky glimmer of something pushing up the carpet of leaves not two feet from where I'd just stepped. I brushed away the leaves and there it was, this big, fleshy, vase-shaped mushroom that I was dead certain had to be a chanterelle.

Or was it?

How certain was that?

I took the mushroom home, brushed off the soil, and put it on a plate, then pulled out my field guides to see if I could confirm the identification. Everything matched up: the color, the faint apricot smell, the asymmetrical trumpet shape on top, the underside etched in a shallow pattern of "false" gills. I felt fairly confident. But confident enough to eat it? Not quite. The field guide mentioned something called a "false chanterelle" that had slightly "thinner" gills. Uh oh. Thinner, thicker: These were relative terms; how could I tell if the gills I was looking at were thin or thick ones? Compared to what? My mother's mycophobic warnings rang in my ears. I couldn't trust my eyes. I couldn't quite trust the field guide. So whom could I trust? Angel! But that meant driving my lone mushroom across the bridge to San Francisco, which seemed excessive. My desire to sauté and eat my first-found chanterelle squabbled with my doubts about it, slender as they were. But by now I had passed the point of being able to enjoy this putative chanterelle without anxiety, so I threw it out.

I didn't realize it at the time, but I had impaled myself that afternoon on the horns of the omnivore's dilemma.

As we look back over these three passages, we notice differences in choice of detail and vocabulary that reflect the different purposes of the authors. The first passage, an informative one, uses a specific, objective, even technical vocabulary: *false chanterelle, distinguishing factors, uniform [color], hue, graded.* The second piece uses words related to its purpose: *purpose, twofold, avoiding, introduce, fine excuse*. The third, a more literary, first-person narrative, uses a richly descriptive, often metaphorical vocabulary: *a yellowish-orange and thickly built trumpet; I scanned the leaf litter; a bright, yolky glimmer of something pushing up the carpet of leaves.* An effective writer will choose details, vocabulary, and point of view (among other factors) that reflect the purpose, audience, and context of the task.

SPEECH AND WRITING

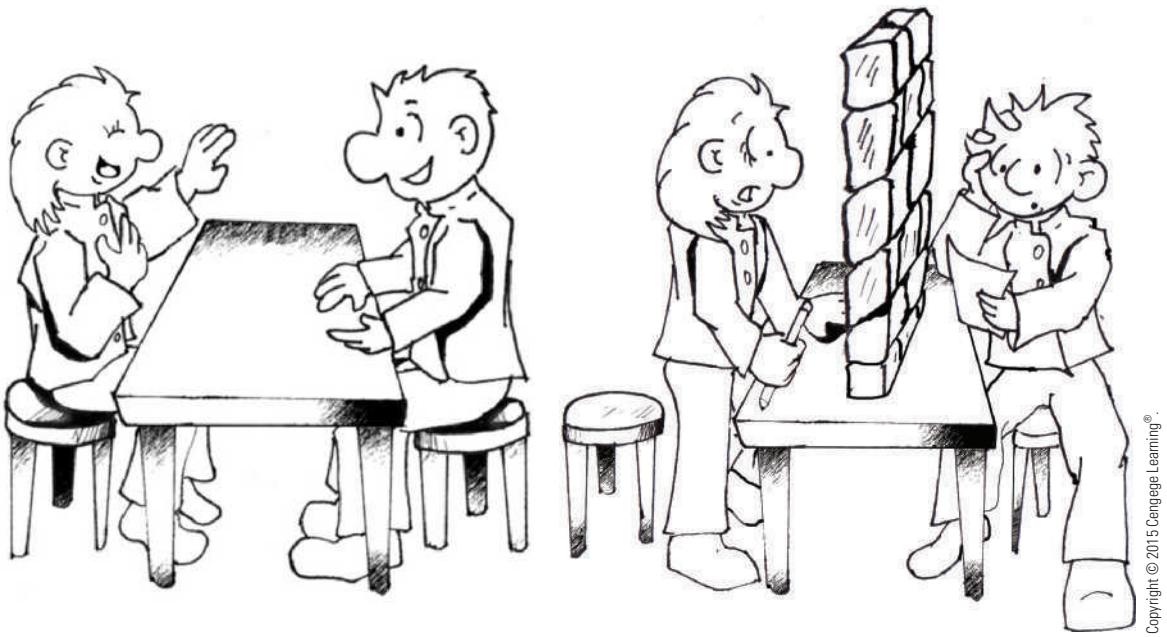
Speech, like **writing**, is a form of **verbal communication**. Both of them use words, but, in addition to the words that are exchanged, speech also makes use of **nonverbal communication**. As we're talking, we can watch the facial expressions, hand gestures, and body language of the audience and make any necessary adjustments to improve communication. Similarly, the audience can watch us as we speak and can interpret the accompanying nonverbal cues as well as the words themselves. Some people find talking much easier than writing because of this nonverbal support.

When it comes to writing, however, it's as if a brick wall has been erected between the reader and the writer (Figure 1.3). The writer has an idea in her head that she wishes to share. She writes a text that puts this idea into words, then passes it on to the reader. In most cases there is no direct contact between the two, no opportunity to ask questions or check comprehension. Therefore, the writer must make a pretty good guess about what the reader already knows about the subject, what questions the reader might wish to ask, what vocabulary will be most clearly understood, what style will be most appropriate. The writer must use aspects of the text itself, including punctuation, to convey the nuances of meaning that might be expressed through nonverbal methods during a face-to-face or even a telephone conversation. Since writing doesn't allow for

Figure 1.3 Speech vs. Writing

When we're speaking, we can use nonverbal cues as well as words.

When we're writing, it's as if a brick wall separates us from the reader.



questions or corrections and must work without the assistance of body language and facial expressions, it needs to be very clear, specific, and complete.

That's not to say that what we know about speech won't help with our writing. On the contrary, that knowledge is vital. We'll use speech at the beginning of a writing assignment when we brainstorm, and we'll use it when we proofread at the end. We'll use the rhythm and vocabulary of our spoken "voice" to begin shaping our *writer's* voice. And we'll use our insights about how conversation works to make important decisions about how to reach and persuade our readers.

In ancient Greece, the philosopher Plato believed that speech was closer to the truth than writing because the speaker was "present." Written language offered only the "appearance" of truth. In fact, Plato believed that writing would lead to a "dumbing down" of his society because people would rely on the written word instead of on the "truer" words of speech. Yet the situation may not be that simple. In the scene from *Sudden Impact*, Loretta and Callahan were both physically present when she poured the sugar. Yet Callahan wasn't paying attention; in some sense he was "absent." It wasn't until he'd left the diner and actually tasted the coffee that the communication took place. Callahan was able to "read" the truth in its unexpected sweetness. Loretta was "present" in the sugary "text."

While Plato viewed the world in binary terms—truth versus appearance, presence versus absence, speech versus writing—some contemporary philosophers see these relationships as more complicated. Is the speaker necessarily more present or more effective than the writer? Can we not feel the presence of the writer through a letter or text or tweet? Do the words of a song sometimes seem to be speaking directly to us through the iPod? Looking at it another way, have we not been in the same room with someone who clearly was not present, not really paying attention, not speaking the truth?

Perhaps speech and writing are more similar than different. Both are forms of language that attempt to embody our thoughts, to achieve a particular purpose. Their success depends on a complex combination of factors, as we saw in Loretta's case: the speaker's character or trustworthiness, her knowledge of the audience, the skill with which she is able to shape the message, and her understanding of the fuller context, the time and place. In any particular situation, we'll try to choose the most effective form of communication.

WHAT MAKES WRITING EFFECTIVE?

Sometimes student writers may think their job is to write "what the teacher wants." And perhaps there is some truth in that. Students usually do have the goal of getting a decent grade, and teachers do have somewhat different ideas of what constitutes a "good" essay. However, if writers don't put their real thoughts and feelings into the essay, readers just won't be that interested. Teachers are somewhat of a captive

audience; they have to read every writing assignment. But in the outside world—the world of cover letters and résumés, restaurant reviews and cookbooks—readers may lose interest if writers don't make a connection with them.

We all know people who are great storytellers—people with an eye for detail, a sense of humor, a unique voice, and the ability to keep us enthralled from beginning to end. We seek these people out and buy them a cup of coffee just to hear their latest story. On the other hand, we also know people who are so vague or boring or negative that we walk quickly in the opposite direction when we see them coming. The same is true of writing. There is some writing that we enjoy thoroughly, that is vivid and detailed, funny or suspenseful. There is other writing that strikes us as dull, pretentious, wordy, insincere—and we just put the book down.

Every piece of writing begins with a need to communicate, that is, with a purpose. Every piece of writing should take into account the background and experience of the audience, as well as the time and place of the communication. Between the writer and the reader is the message, the text, and this message must be "cooked" so that it becomes both tasty and digestible. Effective writing always suggests effective communication. It requires making good decisions about the reader. What would have happened in *Sudden Impact* if Harry Callahan had sipped the coffee immediately? What if the robbers had noticed the excess of sugar? As it turned out, Loretta did know both her audiences and communicated effectively with both.

So, what makes good writing? The answer is, some of the same things that make good cooking: fresh ingredients, specialized skills, and a passion to reach the audience. Our purpose in this book is to find the freshest ingredients for our writing, the freshest ideas, examples, descriptions; to acquire particular skills, such as brainstorming, revising, editing; and to connect our own interests and passions to the content of any given writing assignment, creating texts that effectively communicate what's on our minds.

A TASTE FOR READING

In this chapter from the early pages of Moby-Dick, *the narrator (Ishmael) and his new friend, the cannibal Queequeg (see photo on p. 504), arrive in Nantucket on their way to meeting up with Captain Ahab and setting off in pursuit of the great white whale.*

****

Chowder

from Moby-Dick, or The White Whale by Herman Melville

It was quite late in the evening when the little Moss came snugly to anchor, and Queequeg and I went ashore; so we could attend to no business that day, at least none but a supper and a bed. The landlord of the Spouter-Inn had recommended us to his

cousin Hosea Hussey of the Try Pots[a], whom he asserted to be the proprietor of one of the best kept hotels in all Nantucket, and moreover he had assured us that cousin Hosea, as he called him, was famous for his chowders. In sort[b], he plainly hinted that we could not possibly do better than try pot-luck at the Try Pots. But the directions he had given us about keeping a yellow warehouse on our starboard hand till we opened a white church to the larboard, and then keeping that on the larboard hand till we made a corner three points to the starboard, and that done, then ask the first man we met where the place was: these crooked directions of his very much puzzled us at first, especially as, at the outset, Queequeg insisted that the yellow warehouse—our first point of departure—must be left on the larboard hand, whereas I had understood Peter Coffin to say it was on the starboard. However, by dint of beating about a little in the dark, and now and then knocking up a peaceable inhabitant to inquire the way, we at last came to something which there was no mistaking.

Two enormous wooden pots painted black, and suspended by asses' ears[c], swung from the cross-trees of an old top-mast, planted in front of an old doorway. The horns of the cross-trees were sawed off on the other side, so that this old top-mast looked not a little like a gallows. Perhaps I was over sensitive to such impressions at the time, but I could not help staring at this gallows with a vague misgiving. A sort of crick was in my neck as I gazed up to the two remaining horns; yes, *two* of them, one for Queequeg, and one for me. It's ominous, thinks I. A Coffin my Innkeeper upon landing in my first whaling port[d]; tombstones staring at me in the whalemen's chapel; and here a gallows! and a pair of prodigious black pots too! Are these last throwing out oblique hints touching Tophet[e]?

I was called from these reflections by the sight of a freckled woman with yellow hair and a yellow gown, standing in the porch of the inn, under a dull red lamp swinging there, that looked much like an injured eye, and carrying on a brisk scolding with a man in a purple woolen shirt.

"Get along with ye," said she to the man, "or I'll be combing ye!"

"Come on, Queequeg," said I, "all right. There's Mrs. Hussey."

And so it turned out; Mr. Hosea Hussey being from home, but leaving Mrs. Hussey entirely competent to attend to all his affairs. Upon making known our desires for a supper and a bed, Mrs. Hussey, postponing further scolding for the present, ushered us into a little room, and seating us at a table spread with the relics of a recently concluded repast, turned round to us and said—"Clam or Cod?"

"What's that about Cods, ma'am?" said I, with much politeness.

"Clam or Cod?" she repeated.

"A clam for supper? a cold clam; is *that* what you mean, Mrs. Hussey?" says I; "but that's rather a cold and clammy reception in the winter time, ain't it, Mrs. Hussey?"

---

[a]The name of the inn, from the pots used to "try," or boil, the whale blubber
[b]Most likely "In short"
[c]The handles of the pot
[d]The landlord the Spouter-Inn was named Coffin.
[e]An allusion to hell

But being in a great hurry to resume scolding the man in the purple shirt, who was waiting for it in the entry, and seeming to hear nothing but the word "clam," Mrs. Hussey hurried towards an open door leading to the kitchen, and bawling out "clam for two," disappeared.

"Queequeg," said I, "do you think that we can make out a supper for us both on one clam?"

However, a warm savory steam from the kitchen served to belie the apparently cheerless prospect before us. But when that smoking chowder came in, the mystery was delightfully explained. Oh, sweet friends! hearken[f] to me. It was made of small juicy clams, scarcely bigger than hazel nuts, mixed with pounded ship biscuit, and salted pork cut up into little flakes; the whole enriched with butter, and plentifully seasoned with pepper and salt. Our appetites being sharpened by the frosty voyage, and in particular, Queequeg seeing his favorite fishing food before him, and the chowder being surpassingly excellent, we despatched it with great expedition: when leaning back a moment and bethinking me of Hrs. Hussey's clam and cod announcement, I thought I would try a little experiment. Stepping to the kitchen door, I uttered the word "cod" with great emphasis, and resumed my seat. In a few moments the savory steam came forth again, but with a different flavour, and in good time a fine cod-chowder was placed before us.

We resumed business; and while plying our spoons in the bowl, thinks I to myself, I wonder now if this here has any effect on the head? What's that stultifying saying about chowder-headed people? "But look, Queequeg, ain't that a live eel in your bowl? Where's your harpoon?"

Fishiest of all fishy places was the Try Pots, which well deserved its name; for the pots there were always boiling chowders. Chowder for breakfast, and chowder for dinner, and chowder for supper, till you began to look for fish-bones coming through your clothes. The area before the house was paved with clam-shells. Mrs. Hussey wore a polished necklace of codfish vertebrae; and Hosea Hussey had his account books bound in superior old shark-skin. There was a fishy flavour to the milk, too, which I could not at all account for, till one morning happening to take a stroll along the beach among some fishermen's boats, I saw Hosea's brindled cow feeding on some fish remnants, and marching along the sand with each foot in a cod's decapitated head, looking very slip-shod, I assure ye.

Supper concluded, we received a lamp, and directions from Mrs. Hussey concerning the nearest way to bed; but, as Queequeg was about to precede me up the stairs, the lady reached forth her arm, and demanded his harpoon; she allowed no harpoon in her chambers. "Why not?" said I; "every true whaleman sleeps with his harpoon—but why not!" "Because it's dangerous," says she. "Ever since young Stiggs coming from that unfort'nt v'y'ge of his, when he was gone four years and a half, with only three barrels of *ile,* was found dead in my first floor back, with his harpoon in his side; ever since

[f]Listen

then I allow no boarders to take such dangerous weapons in their rooms at night. So, Mr. Queequeg" (for she had learned his name), "I will just take this here iron, and keep it for you till morning. But the chowder; clam or cod to-morrow for breakfast, men?"

"Both," says I; "and let's have a couple of smoked herring by way of variety."

ABOUT THE READING

- Describe the different types of communication in "Chowder."
- At what point does communication break down? Why? What nonverbal communication reassures the hungry travelers that their dinner won't be a disaster?
- Define the following words: *starboard, larboard, gallows, prodigious, repast, stultifying.* What does "despatched it with great expedition" mean?
- Written over 150 years ago, *Moby-Dick* has a context and some vocabulary we may not be familiar with. How might this affect the book's ability to communicate with contemporary readers? How did it affect you?

Santi Sinrapanurak is a culinary arts major at the Culinary Institute of America. In this journal entry, he reflects on the ups and downs of a hiking trip in northern Thailand.

****

Flying Squirrel Noodles

by Santi Sinrapanurak

It seemed as if we had been walking for fifteen hours at that point, when in actuality we probably had only gotten two hours into our second day of trekking. The combination of humidity and exhaustion was starting to show its effects on our entire group, but I especially was showing the obvious signs of physical exertion. While everyone else had a genteel amount of sweat peppered to their brow, I was so thoroughly soaked from perspiration that you would have thought I had just walked under a waterfall. Not to mention, the poor choice of footwear had also became a burden as *both* my feet had become swollen and infected from the continuous bombardment of monsoon-like weather conditions on two of the three days of our Northern trek.

As I tried to hasten my climbing speed, I thought to myself, "How did I think that this was a good idea for a vacation?" I heard the leader of our pair of guides call out from far ahead, and I remember the moment of panic when I was able to figure out what exactly he had said. Nuut, one of our guides, had shouted that the only way to ascend to base camp, as well as to that day's only true meal, was to cross an incredibly rocky riverbed, and the only way to do so was to literally swing over it with a vine. At first I thought that this must be some ill-timed sense of humor during the more difficult part of the trek, but as I soon discovered, he was as serious as my foot infection.

We finally were winding down our day's route as we reached the infamous river. In truth, the actual swinging across the riverbed was not as intimidating as it had sounded earlier in the day. I, of course, still managed to hop skip my way through the

bramble of jagged rocks that protruded from the water and blocked the path to that day's only meal. As everyone started to wind down and dry off their clothes, we prepared to encircle the campfire that our two guides had set up for us. There is something to be said about physically pushing oneself to the limit in an unfamiliar and mountainous jungle environment in monsoon season, and the specific hunger that follows that particular experience. That is why, after the day I had endured, I expected something not only substantial, but exceedingly appetizing as well. However, as soon as I had seen our navigational duo skewer a flying squirrel, skull first, onto a gnarled stick they had found to the side of the campfire, my hopes were nearly obliterated. And to add insult onto injury, the guides quickly tossed about a half a dozen instant packages of dried Japanese ramen noodles into a pot of pre-simmered water from the river I had just mangled my ankles in. Squirrel meat is both gamey and bitter, so limp yellow noodles, as an accompaniment, do not bring out any hidden attributes to this particular protein.

Needless to say, the time spent in Northern Thailand trekking with a friend would accompany, if not haunt, my future experiences with camping trips. To this day, I harbor no nostalgia for bland instant ramen noodles and fire-roasted flying squirrel meat.

ABOUT THE READING

- What words or phrases particularly strike you? Why?
- Who is the intended audience? What is the purpose of the piece?
- Did the flying squirrel noodles communicate anything to the author? Explain.
- Describe two or three examples—real or imagined—of food used for communication.

RECIPE FOR REVIEW

A CUP OF COFFEE

Communication means sharing thoughts, feelings, and ideas. Verbal communication, like writing and speaking, uses words, while nonverbal communication does not.

MAPPING OUT COMMUNICATION

The three parts of communication are the speaker (or writer), the audience (reader), and the message (written text), all of which are impacted by the time and place. This complex relationship is often diagrammed as a triangle set within a circle or oval (see Figure 1.2).

WRITING WITH A PURPOSE

Writing is said to have one or more of the following general purposes: to inform, entertain, and/or persuade. The purpose of a given writing task will likely be quite specific.

SPEECH AND WRITING

While speakers can also use nonverbal communication, writers must rely on their words alone to achieve their purpose. Yet what we know intuitively about speech can help us become more effective writers.

WHAT MAKES WRITING EFFECTIVE?

Good writing consists of "fresh" ideas that are clearly organized and expressed through well-chosen words and fluently constructed sentences. It has a consistent, individual voice and uses the grammar and mechanics appropriate for the purpose and the audience.

CHAPTER EXERCISES

1. *A Cup of Coffee*—How can or does food communicate?
2. *Mapping Out Communication*—Briefly describe three separate restaurants of different types. What do the customers at each restaurant expect from their food? Now, write three different menu descriptions for a ground meat item, each one designed for a particular purpose.
3. *Writing with a Purpose*—What is one of your favorite childhood dishes? Write a paragraph in which you simply inform the reader about the dish. Next, write a paragraph in which your primary purpose is to entertain rather than inform. Finally, write a paragraph in which you attempt to persuade the reader to try this dish. What differences do you notice between the three paragraphs in terms of details and word choice? Explain.
4. Explain the expression "on the horns of a dilemma." Then explain Michael Pollan's title *The Omnivore's Dilemma*.
5. *Speech and Writing*—Write a set of instructions for blowing a bubble or tying a shoe. Read the instructions to the person next to you. Are they effective? What would you change? How would these instructions have been different if you had been speaking instead of writing?
6. What makes a good dish (of food)? List as many characteristics as you can. Then list as many characteristics of a good piece of writing as you can think of. Compare the two lists. Are there any similarities? Explain.
7. *"Talking with Your Fingers"*—Read John McWhorter's essay "Talking with Your Fingers" (*The New York Times*, April 23, 2012). Do you agree that texting is a new form of communication? Why or why not?

NBC/Photofest © NBC

Captain James T. Kirk (left) and Mr. Spock from the original *Star Trek* series, 1966. Captain Kirk holds a "communicator," often cited as the inspiration for today's cell phones.

IDEAS FOR WRITING

1. Write an essay or paragraph in which you discuss the differences between writing and speaking. Is one easier for you than the other? Explain.
2. Who is a person you think of as an effective communicator? What makes him or her effective? Write an essay or paragraph in which you explain your answer.
3. Write a short story about a person who uses only food to communicate. Use concrete, vivid, sensory details. Explore how other people might react and what problems might arise.
4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of texting as a form of communication? When (if ever) do you choose to send a text rather than make a phone call? Why?

CHAPTER 2
RECIPE FOR READING

By the end of this chapter, you should begin to . . .

- apply the steps of the reading process to a variety of texts;
- distinguish between different purposes for reading and use appropriate, effective strategies for each;
- incorporate "writing to read" strategies in your reading; and
- use effective reading strategies as part of your revision process.

Writing and reading are as closely and inevitably connected as cooking and eating. Just as the end goal in cooking is for someone to eat the food, the end goal in writing is for someone to read the words—whether the writing is a text message, business letter, poem, or academic essay. For most cooks, eating—or *tasting*—is a part of the cooking process itself.[a] Similarly, for effective writers, *reading* is part of the writing process. Writers must read their own work as they revise it, and they must be *good* readers. Unless they can see what their words *actually* say, they won't be able to judge whether the words accurately reflect what they *want* to say. Further, just as good cooks may taste other people's dishes as part of developing their cooking skills, good writers will "taste" other people's writing to get new ideas or to "educate their palates."

Reading is also like listening, and good reading is like good listening. Good listeners will first try to understand what the other person is saying before jumping in with their own comments. Poor listeners, on the other hand, are always thinking about what they are going to say next and in doing so are likely to miss the other person's point altogether. As readers, we should focus on what the actual words say. Read them aloud. Listen to them. Once we've understood the reading, once we've *tasted* all the flavors in a particular dish, then we can evaluate and respond.

Texts come in many different forms, just as foods do, and we have different reasons for reading (or eating) them. (The word "texts" here refers to any piece of writing, not just the message sent from your cell phone.) We don't eat all foods in the same way or for the same purpose. Would you wolf down a chocolate bar the same way you would savor an expensive dessert? No, nor would you read a text message from a friend in the same way you'd read an article about molecular gastronomy or a sonnet by Shakespeare.

[a]See Chapter 12 for a description of cooking *without* tasting!

In this chapter we'll look at strategies for "tasting" different types of texts. If we're reading only for entertainment ("snacking"), we can skim through and ignore nutritional value. However, when we're concerned with more focused, high-stakes types of reading, such as reading for information or ideas ("balanced meals"), we need to take the time to "chew" the text carefully. The following series of steps can help us to read more effectively, that is, to improve our "digestion."

Warner Bros./Photofest

In *The Blind Side,* Michael Oher and S. J. Tuohy are absorbed in listening to Leigh Anne read the children's classic *The Story of Ferdinand.*

THE READING PROCESS

Before you even begin to read, it's helpful to get an idea of the size and scope of the reading. What is the text about, and how long is it? (We do the same with meals—how long does it take to eat a dinner of EasyMac versus a Thanksgiving feast?) If it is a chapter in a textbook, skim through the pages and note the headings. These will give you important clues about the main points covered in the reading.

As you're scanning the chapter, it's also helpful to ask yourself what you already know about that topic. It's easier to understand and remember new information if you have a sense of where it fits in with the knowledge you have now. For example, if you're assigned to read a chapter about foodborne illness, you might think about what you already know about bacteria such as *E. coli* and about cross-contamination, and then ask yourself how the reading will expand on your knowledge. It's as if you're creating a framework for the new information. Then, as you read, you place the new bits of knowledge inside the frame you've already created.

Scanning the chapter will also give you a sense of how much time you'll need to read it carefully. The more you already know about the topic, the less time it may take you to add new information to your mental framework. The less you know, the more time it will take to create and fill that mental framework.

After you have a framework for the new information, go ahead and read the chapter or article. Unlike reading for entertainment, reading for information usually means you don't just read straight through. Instead, you read sections of the text, then pause to make sure you understand what you've just read. If you don't understand, you should read it again, perhaps out loud. Chew it over. Depending on the purpose of your reading, you may want to make a note of any questions you have in order to ask them in class or try to find answers through research. Whatever the topic is, try to *visualize* what you're reading about. If you can imagine the ripening of a tomato or the whisking of a hollandaise sauce, you are more likely to enjoy your reading—and to understand and remember it.

As you read, it is useful to highlight important points and concepts in some way, whether in the text itself or on a separate page of notes. It's more effective to read the chapter once, stopping to understand and record what's important, than to read it through several times without really digesting or retaining the information. Think again about the comparison to eating: the faster you chew and swallow, the less likely you are to perceive and appreciate the flavor profile of a dish. You might even get indigestion! However, when you're focused on *tasting*, you may go very slowly, stopping to inhale the aromas, holding the chocolate or wine in your mouth in order to experience each flavor note completely. Further, chewing each bite carefully improves digestion.

One way to highlight important points is literally with a hi-liter, a brightly colored marker. Highlighting is fun, a smooth slip along the paper. Don't highlight too much, though, or you won't be able to find those important points easily. Instead, highlight just the main idea, key terms, and significant supporting details. Look at the example in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1 Highlighting Important Points in the Text

> That set of rules for preparing food we call a cuisine, for example, specifies combinations of foods and flavors that on examination do a great deal to mediate the omnivore's dilemma. The dangers of eating raw fish, for example, are minimized by consuming it with wasabi, a potent antimicrobial. Similarly, the strong spices characteristic of many cuisines in the tropics, where food is quick to spoil, have antibacterial properties. The meso-American practice of cooking corn with lime and serving it with beans, like the Asian practice of fermenting soy and serving it with rice, turns out to render these plant species much more nutritious than they otherwise would be. When not fermented, soy contains an antitrypsin factor than blocks the absorption of protein, rendering the bean indigestible; unless the corn is cooked with an alkali like lime its niacin is unavailable, leading to the nutritional deficiency called pellagra.
>
> —Michael Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma,* p. 296

If you need more detailed notes, or if you want to be able to erase your notes, try marking up the text with a pencil. Your notes might include any or all of the following: main ideas, supporting points, questions, vocabulary. Compare the notes in Figure 2.2 taken on a portion of the same passage from *The Omnivore's Dilemma.* If you use a good system

Figure 2.2 Detailed Penciled Notes

advantage – it's more nutritious

Like natta?

Scientific explanation

The meso-American practice of cooking corn with lime and serving it with beans, like the Asian practice of fermenting soy and serving it with rice, turns out to render these plant species much more nutritious than they otherwise would be. When not fermented, soy contains an antitrypsin factor than blocks the absorption of protein, rendering the bean indigestible; unless the corn is cooked with an alkali like lime its niacin is unavailable, leading to the nutritional deficiency called pellagra.

definition

not enough niacin

of note-taking, you don't have to keep re-reading the chapter; you simply refresh your memory by looking over your notes. Some people find it more effective to take notes on a separate sheet of paper. These notes can range from quite formal outlines to simple lists of the points you want to remember.

Michael Pollan, An Omnivore's Dilemma, p. 296

I. Benefits of cuisine, that is, specific food pairings
   A. Killing microbes – wasabi with raw fish
   B. Killing bacteria – tropical spices
   C. Enhancing nutritional value – lime with corn and beans, fermented soy with rice

In addition to taking notes of some kind, it can be useful to check your comprehension of the reading by summarizing sections of the text (through writing or speaking) and connecting them to what you already know. Look at the following summary of the paragraph:

Many traditional cuisines use food combinations that protect their "eaters" from foodborne illness and enhance the nutritional value of the ingredients.

If your understanding of the text is limited by an unfamiliar word or reference, try to figure out its meaning from the **context**, that is, from the other words and sentences around it. However, that isn't always possible. Because misunderstanding a word can prevent you from grasping something essential about the passage, it might be more effective to look up words and jot down the definitions in the margins of the text or on your separate page of notes. You don't want to go down the wrong path and have to retrace your steps later. If you need to learn vocabulary words or facts, making flashcards is an extraordinarily effective activity.

Another way of learning and reviewing material from the text is to create your own charts and diagrams or to explain in your own words a chart or diagram from the text. Each time you turn words into pictures or pictures into words, you use both hemispheres of the brain—literally "broadening" your understanding of the text. If you're reading a political or philosophical text, for example, make a chart that compares and contrasts the views of one writer with those of another or with your own. Or, if you're looking at an illustration of the human circulatory system, try explaining it in words. Respond creatively to a text, perhaps by recording your impressions in a journal or writing an imaginary letter to the author. The more "work" you do with a text, the more thoroughly you will understand and remember it.

The steps in the reading process will vary, of course, depending on your purpose in reading, your previous knowledge of the topic, and the difficulty of the text. Let's look at some of the different types of reading you might have to do.

READING FOR INFORMATION

Reading for information is what we do with such texts as news articles, recipes, or textbooks. We're looking for facts and processes, and—depending on how much we already know—we can often skim through, looking for the new facts and details we need and placing them within the framework we've already developed. It might be that we need very specific information, such as the year in which the potato arrived in Europe, and we will simply scan the chapter in search of that detail. If the information is unfamiliar, however, we'll have to read more carefully, and probably take notes on the new terms or steps in a recipe. If the reading is part of a course, you'll need to make sure you learn and remember the new information. You'll probably want to make a separate set of notes for easy review, as well as flashcards if you need to learn specific information like dates, formulas, or vocabulary.

Reading for information is an important skill in the kitchen.

You will also want to be certain that you're reading a reliable source. If the text has been assigned by your instructor, chances are that it has already been vetted. However, not everything we might read contains accurate information. Just because something has been published does not mean it is true. You will want to make some kind of assessment of the credibility or authority of the reading. Ask yourself if the author seems to be knowledgeable and if the publisher or online source is reputable. Test the new information against what you already know. Ask yourself *why* the author is writing this particular text and for what audience. (For a more detailed discussion of evaluating the accuracy of your information, see Chapter 18.)

Reading for information is foundational in our school work and in much of our professional lives. Therefore, the more effective we are at harvesting and digesting information from the text, the better. Dig in to the reading about potatoes in Exercise 2.1.

Exercise 2.1 | Reading for Information

Read the following passage from Harold McGee's *On Food and Cooking* (first edition, 191–192) and note important details. Be sure to look up the meaning of any unfamiliar words.

> The potato, a relative of tobacco and the tomato, is indigenous to Central and South America, from the southern United States to the tip of Chile. It was cultivated more than 4000 years ago in mountainous areas, up to 15,000 feet, where corn cannot

grow, and was a staple food of the Incas. The name comes from a Caribbean Indian word for the *sweet* potato, *batata.* Spanish explorers brought the plant to Europe around 1570, and England and Ireland had it by about 1610 and immediately accepted it as an important food crop. Because it was hardy and easy to grow, the potato was inexpensive and the poor were its principal consumers. . . . The potato came to the United States as a food crop indirectly, via Ireland, in 1719; the first large area of cultivation was near Londonderry, New Hampshire. It quickly became established on all continents, in temperate, subtropical, and tropical climates, and is now the most important vegetable in the world, excluding only the tropical lowlands, where manioc, another large tuber (tapioca is made from its starch) is more easily grown.

Answer the following questions:

1. How old is the potato?
2. What does *indigenous* mean?
3. Who were the Incas?
4. Why were poor people more likely to eat potatoes?
5. How and when was the potato introduced to the United States?

In addition to answering questions about the reading, thinking creatively about the information can help us to understand and remember it. Try the activities in Exercise 2.2 using the same paragraph from McGee.

Exercise 2.2 | Activities to Increase Comprehension

1. In one or two sentences, summarize the paragraph from McGee in Exercise 2.1.
2. Describe a scene in which an American family in 1719 is cooking with potatoes for the first time.
3. Create a timeline of the potato's travels.
4. Draw a map of the potato's travels, labeling the appropriate areas and dates.

READING FOR IDEAS

In addition to reading for information, we may also read for *ideas;* that is, we may read in order to understand a concept and perhaps to apply it to a new situation. Like certain foods, some kinds of written materials are harder to "digest" than others. A book about psychology or economics, for example, will most likely require more time and effort to read than a restaurant or movie review. You may need to read the text several times—perhaps read it out loud to *hear* as well as see the words—and to stop and think carefully about what the author means. Let's look at an example.

In *A Whole New Mind: Moving from the Information Age to the Conceptual Age,* Daniel H. Pink discusses the types of skills needed for success in a changing world. First, he defines two ways of thinking, L-Directed and R-Directed:

> Call the first approach *L-Directed Thinking.* It is a form of thinking and an attitude to life that is characteristic of the left hemisphere of the brain—sequential, literal, functional, textual, and analytical. Ascendant in the Information Age, exemplified by computer programmers, prized by hardheaded organizations, and emphasized in schools, this approach is directed *by* left-brain attributes, *toward* left-brain results. Call the other approach *R-Directed Thinking.* It is a form of thinking and an attitude to life that is characteristic of the right hemisphere of the brain—simultaneous, metaphorical, aesthetic, contextual, and synthetic. Underemphasized in the Information Age, exemplified by creators and caregivers, shortchanged by organizations, and neglected in schools, this approach is directed *by* right-brain attributes, *toward* right-brain results. (26)

Pink then argues that *both* types of thinking are essential for success in the Conceptual Age; that is, a "whole" mind is needed. He goes on to define six of these combined skills, including design. "Design," he explains, "is a classic whole-minded aptitude, "a combination of *utility* [L-Directed Thinking] and *significance* [R-Directed Thinking]" (70). Examples help to make his point clear. From cars and TVs to vegetable brushes and toasters, he writes, the aesthetic appeal or significance of an item is as important to its success in the Conceptual Age as its performance.

Examples are very useful in giving the reader a better handle on an idea. They're a way of re-reading or re-thinking the material. Imagining your own examples or applications can also be helpful. In your experience, for instance, how do the two sides of design play out in a restaurant's dining room or on its menu? Do you choose your kitchen knives and pots based on their utility or on their beauty, or both?

Finally, to check your comprehension, it is useful to paraphrase or summarize the author's idea in your own words.

Exercise 2.3 | Paraphrasing or Summarizing the Reading

Explain L-Directed and R-Directed Thinking in your own words. Then explain how "design" uses both kinds of thinking.

Exercise 2.4 | Finding Your Own Examples

Think about two purchases you've made recently. What role did the "design" of each item play in your decision to buy it over its competitor?

As in all kinds of reading, when you read for ideas you will begin by looking at the facts of the text, the surface details, but you will then want to look *beneath* the surface of the text or "between the lines" and draw conclusions about what is *not* written. For example, ask yourself, What is the author's purpose in writing this particular text? (In a conversation, you might ask yourself, Why is he telling me this?) What assumptions does the author seem to make about the reader's knowledge about the topic and about his political, ethical, or religious beliefs? As we consider another example, the concluding paragraph from José Antonio Burciaga's essay "Tortillas" (Courtesy of University of Texas-Pan American Press), let's look first at the surface details and then at what may lie beneath them.

> Then there is *tortilla* art. Various Chicano artists throughout the Southwest have, when short of materials or just in a whimsical mood, used a dry *tortilla* as a small, round canvas. And a few years back, at the height of the Chicano movement, a priest in Arizona got into trouble with the Church after he was discovered celebrating mass using a *tortilla* as the host. All of which goes to show that while the *tortilla* may be a lowly corn cake, when the necessity arises, it can reach unexpected distinction.

The main idea is that *tortillas* have sometimes been used as art rather than food, and the paragraph offers the two examples of "a small, round canvas" and "the host" in the celebration of mass. We'll want to be sure we understand the surface details, such as the meaning of "whimsical" and the reference to the "Chicano movement." We may want to examine Burciaga's *tone* or attitude in the last sentence and think about whether or not *he* was offended by this use of the *tortilla*, and whether he expects the reader to be.

Exercise 2.5 | Reading for Ideas

Re-read the paragraph from "Tortillas" and answer the following questions:

1. What is the effect of Burciaga telling us that the event (the priest getting into trouble) occurred "at the height of the Chicano movement"?
2. Look up information on Burciaga's life. How does this add to your understanding of the paragraph? Why?

READING LITERATURE

The process of reading a story, poem, or other literary work is similar to the other types of reading we've discussed in that we begin with the surface details, the characters and events, the time and place. We look for the main idea in each paragraph, and we'll also want to look for any implied meaning, assumptions, or contradictions. We may need to look up unfamiliar words or references. We may also want to use such outside

Warner Bros./Photofest

The Harry Potter books continue to engage readers of all ages.

clues as information about the author and the historical context, mythology, psychoanalytic theory, or other fields of study to enrich our understanding of the work. Reading literature differs most perhaps in the degree to which we become engaged with the material. As we read a story, for example, we often empathize with the characters and try to make predictions about what will happen to them. We may discover that the story has connections with our own lives and with other works.

Current research in neuroscience supports the idea that we make strong connections with the stories we read.[2] Apparently when we see a word for a smell (like "coffee") or a texture (like "velvet"), our brains light up in the same areas we'd use when actually smelling or touching something. When we read about a movement of the arm or leg, such as kicking a soccer ball, our brains light up in the same areas we'd use when performing that action ourselves. Further, reading about human interactions in a story can help us develop our social skills as if we were living through the experiences along with the characters. Think back to the reading from *Moby-Dick* in Chapter 1: inhaling the "warm savory steam" of the chowder, chewing the "small juicy clams." Perhaps we imagined ourselves "plying our spoons in the bowl" as Ishmael and Queequeg did.

Look now at the following paragraph, excerpted from Sarah Vowell's essay "Shooting Dad" (17–18), about a father and daughter who disagree on almost everything.

> Our house was partitioned off into territories. While the kitchen and the living room were well within the DMZ, the respective work spaces governed by my father and me were jealously guarded totalitarian states in which each of us declared ourselves dictator. Dad's shop was a messy disaster area, a labyrinth of lathes. Its walls were hung with the mounted antlers of deer he'd bagged, forming a makeshift museum of death. The available flat surfaces were buried under a million scraps of paper on which he sketched his mechanical inventions in blue ballpoint pen. And the floor, carpeted with spiky metal shavings, was a tetanus shot waiting to happen. My domain was the cramped, cold space known as the music room. It was also a messy disaster area, an obstacle course of musical instruments—piano, trumpet, baritone horn, valve trombone, various percussion doodads (bells!), and recorders. A framed portrait of the French composer Claude Debussy was nailed to the wall. The available flat surfaces were buried under piles of staff paper, on which I penciled in the pompous orchestra music [that] I started writing in junior high.

The main idea of this paragraph is clearly stated in the first sentence: "Our house was partitioned off into territories." Author Sarah Vowell then develops this idea through comparing and contrasting the "territories" that belong to her father and herself. Her father, a gunsmith, has a work space filled with tools and ingredients related to his craft, while her space reflects her interest in music. Read the paragraph carefully, checking your understanding of the vocabulary and references.

Exercise 2.6 | Reading Surface Details

Answer the following questions from your reading of the excerpt from "Shooting Dad":

1. What is "the DMZ"?
2. What's a "lathe"? What does a "labyrinth of lathes" look like?
3. Why is the floor "a tetanus shot waiting to happen"?
4. What does "pompous" mean?

If you thought "pompous" meant "excellent" or "romantic," say, rather than "self-important" or "pretentious," you might miss an important clue about the narrator. Sometimes we get tired of looking up new words, but it usually pays off.

Once you're clear about the details, read the paragraph again and try to make sense of what those details tell us about the story and its characters. For example, we might ask what the term "DMZ" or "demilitarized zone" suggests about the relationship between the author and her father. Or we might wonder what the choice of Debussy suggests about the narrator's interests and personality. To answer these questions more fully, of course, we would need to read the entire essay. These are just examples of the *kinds* of questions that help us to look beneath the surface of a literary text.

Reading literature is also different from reading a news story and other types of texts in that the structure of the sentences and the choice of the words themselves are central to the meaning and impact of the work. Notice that although their interests seem diametrically opposed (guns and music), both father and daughter have work spaces described as "a messy disaster area." Also, in each work space "the available flat surfaces were buried under . . . paper." These parallel phrases reveal to the careful reader that there is a similarity between father and daughter. We might reach the same conclusion by visualizing the items mentioned in the paragraph. There are long, hollow metal objects (guns and trumpets) in each work space; therefore father and daughter have something in common.

A special aspect of reading literature is observing and analyzing the use of figurative language, such as metaphor, personification, alliteration, and onomatopoeia. In Vowell's paragraph, we can find the following examples of alliteration, that is, repetition of the initial consonant: "a labyrinth of lathes" (repeated initial *l*'s) and "makeshift museum" (repeated initial *m*'s). Notice how the repetition of sounds draws attention to the passage, adds interest to the text, and suggests a playfulness in the narrator's attitude. (For more on figurative language, see Chapters 12 and 17.)

Finally, in reading literature—as in all types of reading (and listening)—we need to distinguish between what the text actually says and what thoughts we might have about the same topic. Otherwise we might misunderstand the text because we jump too quickly to an "interpretation." Suppose a reader who was opposed to hunting saw the line about "the mounted antlers of deer he'd bagged" and jumped to the conclusion that the father was brutal and unsympathetic, completely missing *Vowell's* clues about her father's personality. While it is natural for us to bring our own experiences into our reading, we also need to be very clear about the difference between our thoughts and the author's actual words. We should always return to the evidence of the text and check our interpretations against it.

READING TO REVISE

In order to be effective writers, we also need to be effective readers of our own work. We have to learn how to read what is actually written on the page rather than get lost in what we were thinking about as we were writing. We have to step away from the work somehow and try to look at it objectively, as if we hadn't written it ourselves. Try to let some time pass before revising—ideally a day or more. If you don't have that much time, however, at least get up and move around, get a drink of water, before looking at what you've just written. At that point you are more likely to read your work effectively.

Just as you might take notes on a textbook chapter, you may find it helpful to take notes on your own writing. Mark passages that are especially good (positive reinforcement works well), that need more information, or that should be revised or deleted. Pencil in ideas. Highlight words or phrases that need revision. If the order of sentences or paragraphs seems off, try re-reading in a different sequence; then make a note of your preference. Be sure to record your reactions *as you read;* you don't want to take the chance of forgetting some important insights.

Another way to increase your effectiveness as the reader of your own work is to read it *aloud,* whether to yourself or others. Reading aloud to a real audience, whether a class or just one person, can dramatically increase your sense of who your readers might be and whether or not your writing is communicating effectively with them. Sometimes you can literally see on their faces whether or not you're getting the reaction you're aiming for—like watching your customers taste the dish you've prepared for them. You may hear that a transition is missing, or that you need to begin a new paragraph. You will also have a reaction yourself: "Yes, it sounds good" or "No, it's not right."

In addition to helping you think about content and organization, reading aloud can help you adjust the rhythm and flow of each sentence. Think about it—reading aloud uses the mouth and tongue just as eating does. By reading aloud we literally feel and taste the words. Sometimes they taste good. They're easy to say, and the sound of them is pleasing. At other times, however, they leave a bad taste, whether because they're confusing, boring, or awkwardly phrased. When you come across such a sentence, try several different alternatives and read each of them out loud. Then choose the most delicious one!

Let's look at an example. Suppose you'd written the following sentence. Read it out loud.

> In Sarah's case the father and daughter seem fine with each other maybe not super close but who knows maybe they shared some interest that they found out later they had in common.

After reading the sentence out loud, we hear that it needs to be shorter, smoother, less repetitive. (It's quite motivating to *hear* the problem. Weak writing is easier to ignore when we just scan over it with our eyes.) Consider this alternative to that clunky sentence:

> Although Sarah and her father aren't particularly close, they seem fine with each other. Maybe one day they'll discover some common interests.

Reading aloud is also useful in proofreading, as it both slows you down and makes you more aware of your audience. It can be helpful to place a sheet of colorful paper on your text to hold your focus on each line. (See also Chapter 29.)

Revision can be frustrating because we just don't want to read our work anymore. We just want the assignment to be over with! However, thoughtful reading and rewriting can dramatically increase the effectiveness of a piece of writing. Taste, and re-season.

A TASTE FOR READING

Elizabeth Bishop has been called one of the most important American poets of the twentieth century, winning the Pulitzer Prize in 1938 and the National Book Award in 1967. Her poetry is known for its precise representations of the physical world and its underlying themes of struggle, grief, and longing.

****

The Fish
by Elizabeth Bishop

I caught a tremendous fish
and held him beside the boat
half out of water, with my hook
fast in a corner of his mouth.
He didn't fight.
He hadn't fought at all.
He hung a grunting weight,
battered and venerable

and homely. Here and there
his brown skin hung in strips
like ancient wallpaper,
and its pattern of darker brown
was like wallpaper:
shapes like full-blown roses
stained and lost through age.
He was speckled with barnacles,
fine rosettes of lime,
and infested
with tiny white sea-lice,
and underneath two or three
rags of green weed hung down.
While his gills were breathing in
the terrible oxygen
—the frightening gills,
fresh and crisp with blood,
that can cut so badly—
I thought of the coarse white flesh
packed in like feathers,
the big bones and the little bones,
the dramatic reds and blacks
of his shiny entrails,
and the pink swim-bladder
like a big peony.
I looked into his eyes
which were far larger than mine
but shallower, and yellowed,
the irises backed and packed
with tarnished tinfoil
seen through the lenses
of old scratched isinglass.
They shifted a little, but not
to return my stare.
—It was more like the tipping

of an object toward the light.
I admired his sullen face,
the mechanism of his jaw,
and then I saw
that from his lower lip
—if you could call it a lip—
grim, wet, and weaponlike,
hung five old pieces of fish-line,
or four and a wire leader
with the swivel still attached,
with all their five big hooks
grown firmly in his mouth.
A green line, frayed at the end
where he broke it, two heavier lines,
and a fine black thread
still crimped from the strain and snap
when it broke and he got away.
Like medals with their ribbons
frayed and wavering,
a five-haired beard of wisdom
trailing from his aching jaw.
I stared and stared
and victory filled up
the little rented boat,
from the pool of bilge
where oil had spread a rainbow
around the rusted engine
to the bailer rusted orange,
the sun-cracked thwarts,
the oarlocks on their strings,
the gunnels—until everything
was rainbow, rainbow, rainbow!
And I let the fish go.