

## An Introduction to Rhetoric: Using the “Available Means”

To many people, the word *rhetoric* automatically signals that trickery or deception is afoot. They assume that an advertiser is trying to manipulate a consumer, a politician wants to obscure a point, or a spin doctor is spinning. “Empty rhetoric” is a common criticism — and at times an indictment. Yet Greek philosopher Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.) defined **rhetoric** as “the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion.” At its best, rhetoric is a thoughtful, reflective activity leading to effective communication, including rational exchange of opposing viewpoints. In Aristotle’s day and in ours, those who understand and can use the available means to appeal to an **audience** of one or many find themselves in a position of strength. They have the tools to resolve conflicts without confrontation, to persuade readers or listeners to support their position, or to move others to take action.

### Key Elements of Rhetoric

Let’s start out by looking at a speech that nearly everyone has read or heard: the speech baseball player Lou Gehrig gave at an Appreciation Day held in his honor on July 4, 1939. Gehrig had recently learned that he was suffering from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), a neurological disorder that has no cure (today it is known as “Lou Gehrig’s disease”). Although Gehrig was a reluctant speaker, the fans’ chant of “We want Lou!” brought him to the podium to deliver one of the all-time most powerful, heartfelt — and brief (under three hundred words) — speeches.



Watch it on the Web: [bedfordstarrtins.com/languageofcomp](http://bedfordstarrtins.com/languageofcomp)

Fans, for the past two weeks you have been reading about a bad break I got. Yet today I consider myself the luckiest man on the face of the earth. I have been in ballparks for seventeen years and have never received anything but

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kindness and encouragement from you fans. Look at these grand men. Which of you wouldn't consider it the highlight of his career just to associate with them for even one day?

Sure, I'm lucky. Who wouldn't consider it an honor to have known Jacob Ruppert, also the builder of baseball's greatest empire, Ed Barrow, to have spent six years with that wonderful little fellow, Miller Huggins; then to have spent the next nine years with that outstanding leader, that smart student of psychology — the best manager in baseball today, Joe McCarthy? Who wouldn't feel honored to have roomed with such a grand guy as Bill Dickey?

Sure, I'm lucky. When the New York Giants, a team you would give your right arm to beat, and vice versa, sends you a gift — that's something! When everybody down to the groundskeepers and those boys in white coats remember you with trophies — that's something!

When you have a wonderful mother-in-law who takes sides with you in squabbles against her own daughter — that's something! When you have a father and mother who work all their lives so that you can have an education and build your body — it's a blessing! When you have a wife who has been a tower of strength and shown more courage than you dreamed existed — that's the finest I know!

So I close in saying that I might have been given a bad break, but I have an awful lot to live for! Thank you.

Why is this an effective speech? First of all, Lou Gehrig understood that rhetoric is always situational: it has a **context** — the occasion or the time and place it was written or spoken — and a **purpose** or goal that the speaker or writer wants to achieve. Gehrig delivered the speech between games of a doubleheader. The more important context, though, is the poignant contrast between the celebration of his athletic career and the life-threatening diagnosis he had received. Within this context, his purpose is to remain positive by looking on the bright side — his past luck and present optimism — and downplaying the bleak outlook. He makes a single reference to the diagnosis and does so in the straightforward language of strength: he got a "bad break" — there is no blame, no self-pity, no plea for sympathy. Throughout, he maintains his focus: to celebrate the occasion and get back to work — that is, playing baseball. While in our time the word *rhetoric* may suggest deception, this speech reminds us that rhetoric can serve sincerity as well.

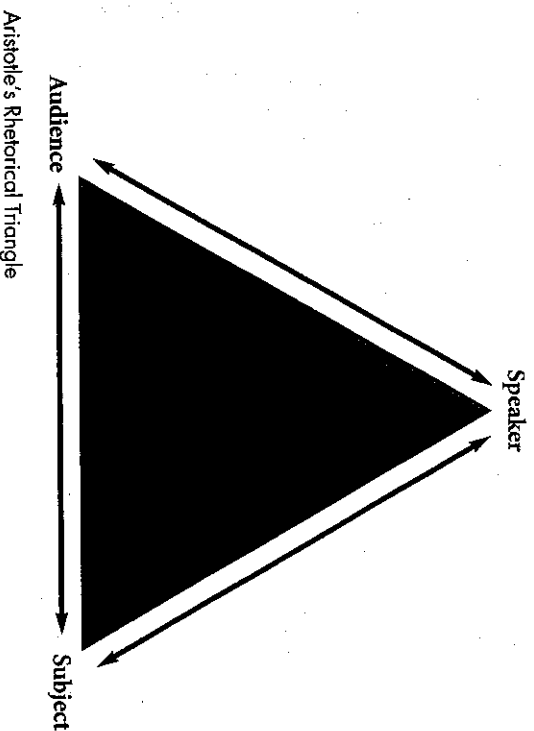
Context and purpose are easy to spot in Gehrig's speech; identifying them in more complex situations is harder, but it is essential to analyzing effective rhetoric. When we read any text, we ask about the context in which it was written. Then we consider the purpose: is the speaker trying to win agreement, persuade us to take action, evoke sympathy, make someone laugh, inform, provoke, celebrate, repudiate, put forth a proposal, secure support, or bring about a favorable decision? Keep in mind too that sometimes the context arises from current events or cultural bias. For example, someone writing about freedom of speech in a com-

munity that has experienced hate graffiti must take that context into account and adjust the purpose of the piece so as not to offend the audience.

Another reason this speech is effective is that Gehrig has a crystal clear **idea**: he's the "luckiest man on the face of the earth." Whether you call this idea **thesis**, a **claim**, or an **assertion**, it is a clear and focused statement. Further, Gehrig knows his **subject** — baseball in general, the New York Yankees in particular. Though he is a champion baseball player, he is not a polished orator or highly sophisticated writer; therefore, as a **speaker** he presents himself as a common man, modest and glad for the life he's lived. His audience is his fans and fellow athletes, those in the stadium as well as those who will hear the speech far after, people rooting for him on and off the field. Gehrig's understanding of these factors — subject (and main idea), speaker, and audience — interact to determine his speech: a plainspoken, positive appreciation for what he has had, and champion's courageous acceptance of the challenges that lie before him. No wonder one commentator wrote, "Lou Gehrig's speech almost rocked Yankee Stadium off its feet."

## The Rhetorical Triangle

One way to consider the elements in Gehrig's speech is through the **rhetorical triangle** below. Some refer to it as the **Aristotelian triangle**, so-called because Aristotle described the interaction among subject, speaker, and audience (or subject, writer, and reader), as well as how this interaction determines



structure and language of the argument — that is, a text or image that establishes a position.

Thus far, we've been analyzing a speech from the viewpoint of the audience, or readers, but skilled writers consider this interaction as they are developing an essay, speech, letter, or other text. Writers or speakers must first choose a **subject** and then evaluate what they already know about it, what others have said about it, and what kind of evidence or proof will sufficiently develop their position.

You might think the identity of the speaker in your own writing is obvious, but that's not necessarily so. Writers often assume what Aristotle called a **persona** — the character the speaker creates when he or she writes or speaks — depending on the context, purpose, subject, and audience. Are you speaking as a poet, comedian, or scholar? Are you speaking as an expert on ice skating, popular music, or a specific software program? Are you speaking as a literary critic in your English class or as a concerned citizen in your local community?

Before you proceed with these explorations and begin to craft an essay, however, it's important to think about the audience. What does the audience know about the subject? What is the audience's attitude toward it? Is there common ground between the writer's and reader's views on the subject? Each audience requires you to use different information to shape your argument effectively.

Imagine you are writing an essay for a college application. Who will read it? What will they be expecting? What is likely to impress them enough to admit you to their school? Or perhaps you're addressing peers you're working with on a collaborative project. Maybe you are writing a letter to a prospective employer who has never met you. If you are writing to a newspaper to express an environmental concern or opposition to a policy proposed by an elected official, your audience might be a larger group — for example, the whole community.

## Appeals to Ethos, Logos, and Pathos

After analyzing the relationship of speaker to subject, audience to speaker, and audience to subject, a writer is ready to make some strategic choices. One is how to persuade the audience by appealing to **ethos**, **logos**, and **pathos**.

### Ethos

Speakers and writers appeal to **ethos**, or character, to demonstrate that they are credible and trustworthy. Think, for example, of a speech discouraging children from using alcohol. Speakers might appeal to **ethos** by stressing that they are concerned parents, psychologists specializing in alcoholism or adolescent behavior, or recovering alcoholics themselves. Appeals to **ethos** often emphasize shared values between the speaker and the audience: when a parent speaks to other parents in the same community, they share a concern for their children's education or

well-being. Lou Gehrig establishes **ethos** quite simply because he is a good sport, a regular guy who shares the audience's love of baseball and family, and like them, he has known good luck and bad breaks.

In some instances, a speaker's reputation immediately establishes **ethos**. For example, the speaker may be a scholar in Russian history and economics as well as the secretary of state. Or the speaker may be "the dog whisperer," a well-known animal behaviorist. In other cases, the speaker establishes **ethos** through the discourse itself, whether written or spoken, by making a good impression. That impression may result from a **tone** of reason and goodwill or from the type and thoroughness of information presented. The speaker's **ethos** — expertise and knowledge, experience, training, sincerity, or a combination of these — gives the audience a reason for listening.

### Logos

Writers and speakers appeal to **logos**, or reason, by offering clear, rational ideas. Appealing to **logos** (Greek, "embodied thought") means having a clear main idea, or thesis, with specific details, examples, facts, statistical data, or expert testimony as support. Of course, the idea must be logical. Although on first reading or hearing, Gehrig's speech may seem largely emotional, it is actually based on irrefutable logic. He starts with the thesis that he is "the luckiest man on the face of the earth" and supports it with two points: (1) his seventeen years of playing baseball and (2) his belief that he has "never received anything but kindness and encouragement from [his] fans." Specifically, he has worked with good people on the field, he's been part of a sterling team, and he has the "blessing" of a supportive family. That he has gotten a "bad break" neither negates nor even lessens any of these experiences. What **assumption**, or underlying belief, links these seemingly contrasting ideas? It's that Gehrig is lucky even though he's had a bad break. He assumes, no doubt as his audience does, that bad breaks are a natural and inevitable part of life.

Another way to appeal to **logos** is to acknowledge a **counterargument** — that is, to anticipate objections or opposing views. While you might worry that raising an opposing view will weaken your argument, you'll be vulnerable if you ignore ideas that run counter to your own. In acknowledging a counterargument, you agree (**concede**) that an opposing argument may be true, but then you deny (**refute**) the validity of all or part of the argument. This concession and refutation actually strengthens your argument; it appeals to **logos** by demonstrating that you considered your subject carefully before making your argument.

In longer, more complex texts, the writer may address the counterargument in greater depth. Lou Gehrig, however, simply concedes what some of his listeners may think — that his bad break is cause for discouragement or even giving up; he disagrees because he has "an awful lot to live for!" Granted, he implies his concession rather than stating it outright, but in addressing it at all, he acknowledges a contrasting way of viewing his situation, that is, a counterargument.

## Pathos

Without question, Gehrig's speech gains power with its appeal to pathos, or emotion. Although writing that relies exclusively on emotional appeals is rarely effective in the long term, choosing language (such as figurative language or personal anecdotes) that engages the emotions of the audience can add an important dimension. Obviously, Gehrig uses the first person (*I*) because he is speaking about himself, but he also chooses a sequence of words with strong positive connotations: *greatest, wonderful, honored, grand, blessing*. He uses one image — *tower of strength* — that may not seem very original but strikes the right note. It is a well-known description that his audience understands — in fact, they probably have used it themselves.

Although an argument that appeals only to the emotions is by definition weak — it's generally **propagandistic** in purpose and more **polemical** than persuasive — an effective speaker or writer understands the power of evoking an audience's emotions. Emotional appeals usually include vivid, concrete description and figurative language. In addition, visual elements often carry a strong emotional appeal. A striking photograph, for example, may strengthen an argument. Advertisers certainly make the most of photos and other visual images to entice or persuade audiences.

## Ethos, Logos, and Pathos in Practice

Let's go through an argument that appeared in a newspaper and analyze the elements we've just discussed. In the following article, which appeared in the *Washington Post* on Mother's Day in 2006, Jody Heyman takes an interesting approach: she organizes her main argument around the counterargument.

### We Can Afford to Give Parents a Break

In an era when the mythology of motherhood is slowly yielding to the realities, it seems only appropriate to disabuse ourselves of some of the myths surrounding our government's treatment of mothers.

Perhaps the most obvious yardstick of governmental respect for mothers is maternity leave policy. Of 168 countries on which I collected data — for Harvard University's Project on Global Working Families and at McGill University — 164 have found a way to guarantee paid maternity leave. The only ones that haven't are Papua New Guinea, Swaziland, Lesotho and the United States. In most high-income countries, moms can receive help from dads who have paid parental leave. Indeed, in 27 countries fathers have a right to at least three months of paid leave at the birth of a child. Not in America.

Breast-feeding is crucial because it lowers infant morbidity and mortality three- to five-fold. But in America, there is no guarantee that mothers will be able to safeguard their infants in this way. While 76 countries ensure

that mothers can take time from work to breast-feed their infants, America does not.

When children get sick, parents in 37 countries are guaranteed at least a minimum amount of paid leave to care for them. This is affordable because children get out of the hospital faster and recover from both chronic and acute illnesses more rapidly when parents are involved in their care. But the United States does not provide leave to any Americans for their own health problems — despite the fact that personal sick leave is a basic right of citizens in more than 150 countries around the world.

While a low-income mother in the United States is twice as likely as a middle-class one to have a child with asthma or another chronic condition and twice as likely to be providing 30 hours or more of care a month for a sickly or sick parent, she is less likely to have the work flexibility she needs to provide that care. Half of middle-class Americans can rely on getting a paid sick leave; three quarters of low-income Americans cannot.

While American women and men agree that women still do more of the housework and provide more of the care both for children and aging parents, they have fewer benefits — less sick leave, annual leave, flexibility at work. The United States has engaged in a unique private-sector experiment — opposed to any partnership between the public and private. The experiment has tested what companies can and will offer voluntarily. This means that companies that want to do the right thing by mothers are stymied. If they offer paid maternity leave, they have to compete with a company across the street that doesn't — an uneven playing field that does not exist in many nations.

The conventional wisdom that the United States cannot afford to adopt more progressive and humane policies toward its own mothers and remains competitive in the global economy is upheld by certain myths.

Myth 1: The United States can't compete while offering policies that would markedly improve the lives of most American parents and children. The World Economic Forum rated the four most competitive nations as Finland, the United States, Sweden and Denmark. All but the United States provide at least a month of paid annual leave, six months of paid parental leave and paid sick leave.

Myth 2: Decent working conditions will lead to high unemployment. Iceland enjoys among the world's lowest unemployment rates, at 3.4 percent, yet ensures that all its working citizens enjoy a month of paid annual leave and extensive paid sick leave.

Myth 3: Decent working conditions will inhibit economic growth. Ireland got the nickname "Celtic Tiger" because its growth rate is among the world's highest — 6.4 percent per year throughout the 1990s and in the early years of this decade. It achieved this growth rate while ensuring six months of paid parental leave, four weeks of paid annual leave, short- and long-term paid sick leave and unpaid leave to meet children's health needs.

If politicians of either mainstream persuasion in the United States really valued mothers and families on Mother's Day or any other day, they would commit to finally ensuring rights for American mothers and fathers that most parents around the world already enjoy. They would ensure that American mothers receive paid maternity leave, as mothers in 164 other nations do. They would ensure that moms have breast-feeding breaks and sick leave. They would support early childhood education and after-school programs. Then the United States could be truly competitive in the most meaningful sense, and "Happy Mother's Day" would be more than just another myth.

*The writer is director of the McGill University Institute for Health and Social Policy, founder of the Project on Global Working Families at Harvard, and author of Forgotten Families: Ending the Growing Crisis Confronting Children and Working Parents in a Global Economy.*

Jody Heyman establishes ethos from the outset by referring to "our government," indicating that even though she is being critical, she is doing so on behalf of the audience. Then immediately in the next paragraph, she provides information that establishes her as an expert: she has "collected data — for Harvard University's Project on Global Working Families and at McGill University." Working with projects associated with two prestigious universities gives her strong credibility to speak on the subject. Further, at the end of the article, a biographical note states that Heyman was the director or founder of each project and indicates she has written a book on the topic at hand. Without question, her voice is an informed one.

Note that *where* something is published affects its credibility. In Heyman's case, her opinion piece appeared in a newspaper based in the nation's capital (where the legislation that Heyman calls for would be enacted). Moreover, it is a well-respected publication. In addition, this newspaper is associated more with liberal than conservative views, so Heyman can assume that her audience will be more receptive than hostile to her position. Although her readers may not agree with everything, they are likely to be willing to consider her views regarding family leave. Articles such as Heyman's are often reprinted in other publications, so it's always good to note where they originally appeared in order to understand who the writer was targeting.

Perhaps Heyman's strongest appeal to logos is her decision to frame her viewpoint not as a women's rights issue but as an economic one. She develops her argument for several paragraphs with facts and figures, presumably from the data she has collected. In fact, she begins the second paragraph by citing policies in other countries. She then goes on to write, for example, "When children get sick, parents in 37 countries are guaranteed at least a minimum amount of paid leave to care for them," and "personal sick leave is a basic right of citizens in more than 150 countries around the world."

She also appeals to reason by carefully analyzing cause and effect. When she compares the situations of low- and middle-income mothers, for instance, she

emphasizes the effect on each group of not having paid sick leave or "work flexibility." Then she points out the disparity between men's and women's working conditions in order to emphasize the burdens carried by women, who are less likely to have the means to shoulder them.

After Heyman appeals to logos through facts, figures, and analysis, she focuses on what she expects to be the central objection to her call for an expanded maternity leave policy: "that the United States cannot afford to adopt more progressive and humane policies toward its own mothers and remain competitive in the global economy." She presents this concern in the form of three counterarguments — which she calls "myths" — and addresses them one by one. She refutes each with more facts, figures, and analysis. For instance, one of the myths is that "Decent working conditions will lead to high unemployment." Her refutation is to cite the case of Iceland, which "enjoys among the world's lowest unemployment rates, at 3.4 percent, yet ensures that all its working citizens enjoy a month of paid annual leave and extensive paid sick leave."

Does Heyman ignore pathos? She does not, for instance, identify herself as a mother or call on her personal experience with motherhood in any way, which might tug at the reader's heartstrings. Yet, she uses the occasion of Mother's Day and the warm feelings surrounding it to appeal to the audience's emotions. "If politicians . . . in the United States really valued mothers and families on Mother's Day," she suggests, they would enact the policies she advocates. And by writing in her final sentence, "Happy Mother's Day" would be more than just another myth," Heyman uses the emotional power of Mother's Day to compel readers to consider her argument.

#### • ASSIGNMENT •

Widely considered the greatest scientist of the twentieth century, Albert Einstein (1879–1955) is responsible for the theory of relativity. He won the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1921. In 1936, he wrote the following letter to a sixth-grade student, Phyllis Wright, in response to her question as to whether scientists pray, and if so, what they pray for. How rhetorically effective do you find Einstein's response? Explain your answer in terms of subject, speaker, audience, context and purpose; and appeals to logos, ethos, and pathos.

January 24, 1936

Dear Phyllis,

I have tried to respond to your question as simply as I could. Here is my answer.

Scientific research is based on the idea that everything that takes place is determined by laws of nature, and therefore this holds for the actions of

people. For this reason, a research scientist will hardly be inclined to believe that events could be influenced by a prayer, i.e., by a wish addressed to a supernatural being.

However, it must be admitted that our actual knowledge of these laws is only imperfect and fragmentary, so that, actually, the belief in the existence of basic all-embracing laws in Nature also rests on a sort of faith. All the same this faith has been largely justified so far by the success of scientific research. But, on the other hand, every one who is seriously involved in the pursuit of science becomes convinced that a spirit is manifest in the laws of the Universe — a spirit vastly superior to that of man, and one in the face of which we with our modest powers must feel humble. In this way the pursuit of science leads to a religious feeling of a special sort, which is indeed quite different from the religiosity of someone more naive.

I hope this answers your question.

Best wishes

Yours,

Albert Einstein

## Visual Rhetoric

So far we've been discussing texts that consist of words, either written or spoken, but the same elements of rhetoric are at work with visual texts, like political cartoons. Although political cartoons are often *satiric*, they may also comment without any hint of sarcasm or criticism. Consider the accompanying cartoon, which cartoonist Tom Toles drew after the death of civil-rights icon Rosa Parks in 2006. Parks was the woman who refused in 1955 to give up her seat on the bus in Montgomery, Alabama; that act came to symbolize the struggle for racial equality in the United States.

We can discuss the cartoon in the terms we've been using to examine texts that are exclusively verbal: The subject is the death of Rosa Parks, a well-known person loved by many. The speaker is Tom Toles, a respected and award-winning political cartoonist. The audience is made up of readers of the *Washington Post* and other newspapers; that is, it's a very broad audience. The speaker can assume his audience shares his admiration and respect for Parks and that they view her passing as the loss of a public figure as well as a private woman. And finally, the context is a memorial for a well-loved civil rights activist, and Toles's purpose is to remember Parks as an ordinary citizen whose courage and determination brought extraordinary results.



As you can see in this example, it's not uncommon for one passage or image to use more than one appeal. Readers' familiarity with Toles — along with his obvious respect for his subject — establishes his ethos. The image in the cartoon appeals primarily to pathos. Toles shows Rosa Parks, who was a devout Christian as she is about to enter heaven through the pearly gates; they are attended by an angel, probably Saint Peter, who is reading a ledger. Toles depicts Parks wearing a simple coat and carrying her pocketbook, as she did while sitting on the bus so many years ago. The commentary at the bottom right reads, "We've been holding it [the front row in heaven] open since 1955," a reminder that more than fifty years have elapsed since Parks resolutely sat where she pleased. The caption can be seen as an appeal to both pathos and logos. Its emotional appeal is its acknowledgment that, of course, heaven would have been waiting for this good woman but the mention of "the front row" appeals to logic because Parks made her mark in history for refusing to sit in the back of the bus. Some might even read the caption as a criticism of how slow the country was both to integrate and to pay tribute to Parks.

## • ASSIGNMENT •

Analyze a political cartoon in terms of the rhetorical triangle and its appeals to logos, pathos, and ethos. As part of your analysis of audience, note if possible where the cartoon first appeared, and describe that source's political leanings. Finally, examine the interaction of written text and visual images.

## An Example of Rhetoric from Literature

Rhetoric is by no means limited to nonfiction. Poetry, fiction, and drama also seek to persuade. For example, in Book 24 of Homer's epic *The Iliad*, the story of the Trojan War, the Greek warrior Achilles has defeated the Trojan prince Hector. Achilles has not only refused to return his rival's body to Troy for burial, but he has also dishonored it by lashing it to a chariot and pulling it through the dirt. This is the context. The purpose is that Priam, king of Troy and Hector's aged father, wants to reclaim his son's body from the brutal Achilles. In this scene, old meets young; the defeated meets the conqueror. Priam knows that his success depends on the strength of his rhetoric. He begins:

Remember your own father,  
Achilles, in your godlike youth: his years  
like mine are many, and he stands upon  
the fearful doorstep of old age. He, too,  
is hard pressed it may be, by those around him,  
there being no one able to defend  
him from bane of war and ruin. Ah, but he  
may nonetheless hear news of you alive,  
and so with glad heart hope through all his days  
for sight of his dear son, come back from Troy,  
while I have deathly fortune. . . .  
And he who stood alone among them all,  
their champion, and Troy's, ten days ago  
you killed him, fighting for his land, my prince, Hector.  
It is for him that I have come  
among these ships, to beg him back from you,  
and I bring ransom without stint.  
Achilles, be reverent toward the great gods! And take  
pity on me, remember your own father.  
Think me more pitiful by far, since I  
have brought myself to do what no man else  
has done before — to lift to my lips the hand  
of one who killed my son.

In this powerfully moving passage, Priam, the speaker, knows that his audience, Achilles, will resist the subject, Priam's request for his son's body. He knows that his ethos cannot be his kingship, since he is king of a nearly vanquished country. Thus he assumes the persona of an aging and grieving father and appeals to Achilles by beginning, "Remember your own father." Knowing that a logical appeal is unlikely to move the rash Achilles, Priam appeals to pathos, reminding the "godlike" warrior that his father's "years / like mine are many, and he stands upon / the fearful doorstep of old age." Priam repeats this appeal as he asks for pity, reminding his audience that Achilles' father can still hope to see his son alive while Priam cannot. Priam appeals to logos, to Achilles' reason, when he offers "ransom" and reminds him to "be reverent toward the great gods." Note that he wisely saves these points for last, after he has engaged Achilles' emotion. Priam is successful, Homer tells us later, in stirring in Achilles "new longing, and an ache of grief." Achilles grants Priam's request.

## Arrangement

Another element of rhetoric is the organization of a piece, what classical rhetoricians called arrangement. Whether you're analyzing a text or writing your own consider how the essay and its individual paragraphs or sections are arranged. Is the text organized in the best possible way in order to achieve its purpose? An essay always has a beginning, middle, and end: an introduction, development paragraphs, and conclusion. But how a writer structures the argument within that framework depends upon his or her intended purpose and effect. In the following sections, we'll look at a formal classical model of arrangement; then we'll examine rhetorical patterns of development.

### The Classical Model

Classical rhetoricians outlined a five-part structure for an oratory, or speech, that writers still use today, although perhaps not always consciously:

- The introduction (*exordium*) introduces the reader to the subject under discussion. In Latin, *exordium* means "beginning a web," which is an apt description for an introduction. Whether it is a single paragraph or several the introduction draws the readers into the text by piquing their interest challenging them, or otherwise getting their attention. Often the introduction is where the writer establishes ethos.
- The narration (*narratio*) provides factual information and background material on the subject at hand, thus beginning the developmental paragraphs, or establishes why the subject is a problem that needs addressing. The level of detail a writer uses in this section depends largely on the audience's knowledge of the subject. Although classical rhetoric describe



narration as appealing to *logos*, in actuality it often appeals to *pathos* because the writer attempts to evoke an emotional response about the importance of the issue being discussed.

- The confirmation (*confirmatio*), usually the major part of the text, includes the development or the proof needed to make the writer's case — the nuts and bolts of the essay, containing the most specific and concrete detail in the text. The confirmation generally makes the strongest appeal to *logos*.
- The refutation (*refutatio*), which addresses the counterargument, is in many ways a bridge between the writer's proof and conclusion. Although classical rhetoricians recommended placing this section at the end of the text as a way to anticipate objections to the proof given in the confirmation section, this is not a hard-and-fast rule. Earlier we analyzed an essay about working mothers in which the author, Jody Heyman, used counterarguments as an overall organization. If opposing views are well known or valued by the audience, a writer will address them before presenting his or her own argument. The counterargument's appeal is largely to *logos*.

• The conclusion (*peroratio*) — whether it is one paragraph or several — brings the essay to a satisfying close. Here the writer usually appeals to *pathos* and reminds the reader of the ethos established earlier. Rather than simply repeating what has gone before, the conclusion brings all the writer's ideas together and answers the question, so what? Writers should remember the classical rhetoricians' advice that the last words and ideas of a text are those the audience is most likely to remember.

An example of the classical model at work is the piece below written in 2006 by Sandra Day O'Connor, a former Supreme Court justice, and Roy Romer, superintendent of the Los Angeles Unified School District.

### Not by Math Alone

Fierce global competition prompted President Bush to use the State of the Union address to call for better math and science education, where there's evidence that many schools are falling short.

We should be equally troubled by another shortcoming in American schools: Most young people today simply do not have an adequate understanding of how our government and political system work, and they are thus not well prepared to participate as citizens.

This country has long exemplified democratic practice to the rest of the world. With the attention we are paying to advancing democracy abroad, we ought not neglect it at home.

Introduction

Narration

Two-thirds of 12th-graders scored below “proficient” on the last national civics assessment in 1998, and only 9 percent could list two ways a democracy benefits from citizen participation. Yes, young people remain highly patriotic, and many volunteer in their communities. But most are largely disconnected from current events and issues.

A healthy democracy depends on the participation of citizens, and that participation is learned behavior; it doesn't just happen. As the 2003 report “The Civic Mission of Schools” noted: “Individuals do not automatically become free and responsible citizens, but must be educated for citizenship.” That means civic learning — educating students for democracy — needs to be on par with other academic subjects.

This is not a new idea. Our first public schools saw education for citizenship as a core part of their mission. Eighty years ago, John Dewey said, “Democracy needs to be reborn in every generation and education is its midwife.”

But in recent years, civic learning has been pushed aside. Until the 1960s, three courses in civics and government were common in American high schools, and two of them (“civics” and “problems of democracy”) explored the role of citizens and encouraged students to discuss current issues. Today those courses are very rare.

What remains is a course on “American government” that usually spends little time on how people can — and why they should — participate. The effect of reduced civic learning on civic life is not theoretical. Research shows that the better people understand our history and system of government, the more likely they are to vote and participate in the civic life.

We need more and better classes to impart the knowledge of government, history, law and current events that students need to understand and participate in a democratic republic. And we also know that much effective civic learning takes place beyond the classroom — in extracurricular activity, service work that is connected to class work, and other ways students experience civic life.

Preserving our democracy should be reason enough to promote civic learning. But there are other benefits. Understanding society and how we relate to each other fosters the attitudes essential for success in college, work and communities; it enhances student learning in other subjects.

Economic and technological competitiveness is essential, and America's economy and technology have flourished

Confirmation



because of the rule of law and the “assets” of a free and open society. Democracy has been good for business and for economic well-being. By the same token, failing to hone the civic tools of democracy will have economic consequences.

Bill Gates — a top business and technology leader — argues strongly that schools have to prepare students not only for college and career but for citizenship as well.

None of this is to diminish the importance of improving math and science education. This latest push, as well as the earlier emphasis on literacy, deserves support. It should also be the occasion for a broader commitment, and that means restoring education for democracy to its central place in school.

We need more students proficient in math, science and engineering. We also need them to be prepared for their role as citizens. Only then can self-government work. Only then will we not only be more competitive but also remain the beacon of liberty in a tumultuous world.

*Sandra Day O'Connor retired as an associate justice of the Supreme Court. Roy Romer, a former governor of Colorado, is superintendent of the Los Angeles Unified School District. They are co-chairs of the national advisory council of the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools.*

Sandra Day O'Connor and Roy Romer follow the classical model very closely. The opening two paragraphs are an introduction to the main idea the authors develop. In fact, the last sentence is their two-part claim, or thesis: “Most young people today simply do not have an adequate understanding of how our government and political system work, and they are thus not well prepared to participate as citizens.” O'Connor’s position as a former Supreme Court justice establishes her ethos as a reasonable person, an advocate for justice, and a concerned citizen. Romer’s biographical note at the end of the article suggests similar qualities. The authors use the pronoun “we” to refer not only to themselves but to all of “us” who are concerned about American society. The opening phrase “Fierce global competition” connotes a sense of urgency, and the warning that we are not adequately preparing our young people to participate as citizens is sure to evoke an emotional response of concern, even alarm.

In paragraphs 3 to 6 — the narration — the authors provide background information, including facts that add urgency to their point. They cite statistics, quote from research reports, even call on the well-known educator John Dewey. They also include a definition of “civic learning,” a key term in their argument. Their facts-and-figures appeal is largely to logos, though the language of “a healthy democracy” certainly engages the emotions.

Refutation

Conclusion

Paragraphs 7 to 12 present the bulk of the argument — the confirmation — by offering reasons and examples to support the case that young people lack the knowledge necessary for them to be informed citizens. The authors link civic learning to other subjects as well as to economic development. They quote Bill Gates, chairman of Microsoft, who has spoken about the economic importance of a well-informed citizenry.

In paragraph 13, O'Connor and Romer briefly address a major objection — the refutation — that we need to worry more about math and science education than about civic learning. While they concede the importance of math, science, and literacy, they point out that it is possible to increase civic education without undermining the gains made in those other fields.

The final paragraph — the conclusion — emphasizes the importance of a democracy to a well-versed citizenry, a point that stresses the shared values of the authors with their audience. The appeal to pathos is primarily through the vivid language, particularly the final sentence with its emotionally charged description “beacon of liberty,” a view of their nation that most Americans hold dear.

## Patterns of Development

Another way to consider arrangement is according to purpose. Is the writer’s purpose to compare and contrast, to narrate an event, to define a term? Each of these purposes suggests a method of organization, or arrangement. These patterns of development include a range of logical ways to organize an entire text or, more likely, individual paragraphs or sections. In the following pages, we’ll discuss the major patterns of development by examining excerpts from the essays in this book.

### Narration

Narration refers to telling a story or recounting a series of events. It can be based on personal experience or on knowledge gained from reading or observation. Chronology usually governs narration, which includes concrete detail, a point of view, and sometimes such elements as dialogue. Narration is not simply crafting an appealing story; it is crafting a story that supports your thesis.

Writers often use narration as a way to enter into their topics. In the following example, Rebecca Walker tells a story about her son to lead into her explanation of why she put together the anthology *Putting Down the Gun* (p. 412).

The idea for this book was born one night after a grueling conversation with my then eleven-year-old son. He had come home from his progressive middle school unnaturally quiet and withdrawn, struggling off my questions of concern with uncharacteristic irritability. Where was the sunny, chatty boy I dropped off that morning? What had befallen him in the perilous halls of middle school? I backed off but kept a close eye on him, watching for clues.

After a big bowl of his favorite pasta, he sat on a sofa in my study and read his science textbook as I wrote at my desk. We both enjoyed this simple yet profound togetherness, the two of us focused on our own projects yet palpably connected. As we worked under the soft glow of paper lanterns, with the heat on high and our little dog snoring at his feet, my son began to relax. I could feel a shift as he began to remember, deep in his body, that he was home, that he was safe, that he did not have to brace to protect himself from the expectations of the outside world.

Walker brings her audience into her experience with her son by narrating step-by-step what happened and what she noticed when he returned from school. It's not only a personal story but also one that she will show has wider significance in the culture. Narration has the advantage of drawing readers in because everyone loves a good story.

## Description

Description is closely allied with narration because both include many specific details. However, unlike narration, description emphasizes the senses by painting a picture of how something looks, sounds, smells, tastes, or feels. Description is often used to establish a mood or atmosphere. Rarely is an entire essay descriptive, but clear and vivid description can make writing more persuasive. By asking readers to see what you see and feel what you feel, you make it easy for them to empathize with you, your subject, or your argument. In the following example from "Serving in Florida" (p. 179), Barbara Ehrenreich describes her coworkers:

I make friends, over time, with the other "girls" who work my shift: Nita, the tattooed twenty-something who taunts us by going around saying brightly, "Have we started making money yet?" Ellen, whose teenage son cooks on the graveyard shift and who once managed a restaurant in Massachusetts but won't try out for management here because she prefers being a "common worker" and not "ordering people around." Easy-going fiftyish Lucy, with the raucous laugh, who limps toward the end of the shift because of something that has gone wrong with her leg, the exact nature of which cannot be determined without health insurance. We talk about the usual girl things — men, children, and the sinister allure of Jerry's chocolate peanut-butter cream pie.

Ehrenreich's primary purpose here is to humanize her coworkers and make her readers understand their struggle to survive on the minimum wage. To achieve this, she makes them specific living-and-breathing human beings who are "tattooed" or have a "raucous laugh."

Narration and description often work hand in hand, as in the following paragraph from "Shooting an Elephant" (p. 979) by George Orwell. The author nar-

rates the death throes of the elephant in such dense and vivid detail that we mourn the loss and realize that something extraordinary has died, and the narrator (Orwell), like all of us, is diminished by that passing — which is the point Orwell wants us to understand:

When I pulled the trigger I did not hear the bang or feel the kick — one never does when a shot goes home — but I heard the devilish roar of glee that went up from the crowd. In that instant, in too short a time, one would have thought, even for the bullet to get there, a mysterious, terrible change had come over the elephant. He neither stirred nor fell, but every line of his body had altered. He looked suddenly stricken, shrunken, immensely old, although the frightful impact of the bullet had paralysed him without knocking him down. At last, after what seemed a long time — it might have been five seconds, I dare say — he sagged flabbily to his knees. His mouth slobbered. An enormous senility seemed to have settled upon him. One could have imagined him thousands of years old. I fired again into the same spot. At the second shot he did not collapse but climbed with desperate slowness to his feet and stood weakly upright, with legs sagging and head drooping, fired a third time. That was the shot that did for him. You could see the agony of it jolt his whole body and knock the last remnant of strength from his legs. But in falling he seemed for a moment to rise, for as his hind legs collapsed beneath him he seemed to tower upward like a huge rock toppling, his trunk reaching skyward like a tree. He trumpeted, for the first and only time. And then down he came, his belly towards me, with a crash that seemed to shake the ground even where I lay.

Note the emotionally charged language, such as "devilish roar of glee," and the strong verbs such as "slobbered," "did not collapse but climbed." Note the descriptive details: "jolt," "sagging," "drooping," "desperate slowness." The language is so vivid that we feel as though a drawing or painting is emerging with each detail the author adds.

## Process Analysis

Process analysis explains how something works, how to do something, or how something was done. We use process analysis when we explain how to bake bread or set up an Excel spreadsheet, how to improve a difficult situation or assemble a treadmill. Many self-help books are essentially process analysis. The key to successful process analysis is clarity: it's important to explain a subject clearly and logically, with transitions that mark the sequence of major steps, stages, or phases of the process.

In the essay "Transsexual Frogs" (p. 655), Elizabeth Royte uses process analysis to explain the research of Tyrone Hayes, a biologist at the University of California at Berkeley investigating the impact of the pesticide atrazine.

The next summer Hayes headed into the field. He loaded a refrigerated 18-wheel truck with 500 half-gallon buckets and drove east, followed by his students. He parked near an Indiana farm, a Wyoming river, and a Utah pond, filled his buckets with 18,000 pounds of water, and then turned his rig back toward Berkeley. He thawed the frozen water, poured it into hundreds of individual tanks, and dropped in thousands of leopard-frog eggs collected en route. To find out if frogs in the wild showed hermaphroditism, Hayes dissected juveniles from numerous sites. To see if frogs were vulnerable as adults, and if the effects were reversible, he exposed them to atrazine at different stages of their development.

In this example, Royte explains how something was done, that is, the actual physical journey that Hayes took when he “headed into the field”: he traveled from California to Indiana, Wyoming, Utah, and back to California. The verbs themselves emphasize the process of his work: he “loaded,” “parked,” “filled,” “turned . . . back,” “thawed,” “poured,” and “dropped.”

### Exemplification

Providing a series of examples — facts, specific cases, or instances — turns a general idea into a concrete one; this makes your argument both clearer and more persuasive to a reader. A writer might use one extended example or a series of related ones to illustrate a point. You’re probably familiar with this type of development. How many times have you tried to explain something by saying, “Let me give you an example?”

Aristotle taught that examples are a type of logical proof called **induction**. That is, a series of specific examples leads to a general conclusion. If you believe, for example, that hip-hop culture has gone mainstream, you might cite a series of examples that leads to that conclusion. For example, you could discuss hip-hop music in chain-store advertising, the language of hip-hop gaining widespread acceptance, and entertainers from many different backgrounds integrating elements of hip-hop into their music.

In the following paragraph from “I Know Why the Caged Bird Cannot Read” (p. 89), Francine Prose establishes the wide and, she believes, indiscriminate range of readings assigned in high school classes by giving many examples of those her own sons have read:

My own two sons, now twenty-one and seventeen, have read (in public and private schools) Shakespeare, Hawthorne, and Melville. But they’ve also slogged repeatedly through the manipulative melodramas of Alice Walker and Maya Angelou, through sentimental middlebrow favorites (*To Kill a Mockingbird* and *A Separate Peace*), the weaker novels of John Steinbeck, the fantasies of Ray Bradbury. My older son spent the first several weeks of sophomore English discussing the class’s summer assignment, *Ordinary People*, a

weeper and former bestseller by Judith Guest about a “dysfunctional” family recovering from a teenage son’s suicide.

Prose develops her point by giving examples of authors, novels, and types of novels. But only in the case of *Ordinary People* does she discuss the example. The others are there to support her point about the rather random nature of book assigned in high school classrooms.

In the following paragraph, instead of giving several examples, Prose uses one extended example to make the point that even so-called great literature is often poorly taught. Note how she mines the example of *Huckleberry Finn* to discuss the various objections and concerns she has about teaching:

It’s cheering that so many lists include *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* — but not when we discover that this moving, funny novel is being taught not as a work of art but as a piece of damning evidence against that bigot, Mark Twain. A friend’s daughter’s English teacher informed a group of parents that the only reason to study *Huckleberry Finn* was to decide whether it was a racist text. Instructors consulting *Teaching Values Through Teaching Literature* will have resolved this debate long before they walk into the classroom to supervise “a close reading of *Huckleberry Finn* that will reveal the various ways in which Twain undercuts Jim’s humanity: in the minstrel routines with Huck as the ‘straight man’; in generalities about Blacks as unreliable, primitive and slow-witted. . . .”

By examining one case in depth — *Huckleberry Finn* — Prose considers the novel itself, ways it is taught, and the suggestions in one book of how to teach it. Note that she might have brought in other examples, treating each briefly, but focusing on one book allows her to examine the issue more closely.

### Comparison and Contrast

A common pattern of development is comparison and contrast: juxtaposing two things to highlight their similarities and differences. Writers use comparison and contrast to analyze information carefully, which often reveals insights into the nature of the information being analyzed. Comparison and contrast is often required on examinations where you have to discuss the subtle differences or similarities in the method, style, or purpose of two texts.

In the following excerpt from “Walking the Path between Worlds” (p. 300), Lori Arviso Alford compares and contrasts the landscape and culture of her home in the Southwest with that of New England and Dartmouth College:

My memories of my arrival in Hanover, New Hampshire, are mostly of the color green. Green cloaked the hillsides, crawled up the ivied walls, and was reflected in the river where the Dartmouth crew students sculled. For

a girl who had never been far from Crownpoint, New Mexico, the green felt incredibly juicy, lush, beautiful, and threatening. Crownpoint had had vast acreage of sky and sand, but aside from the pastel scrub brush, mesquite, and chamiso, practically the only growing things there were the tiny stunted pines called piñon trees. Yet it is beautiful; you can see the edges and contours of red earth stretching all the way to the boxshaped faraway cliffs and the horizon. No horizon was in sight in Hanover, only trees. I felt claustrophobic.

If the physical contrasts were striking, the cultural ones were even more so. Although I felt lucky to be there, I was in complete culture shock. I thought people talked too much, laughed too loud, asked too many personal questions, and had no respect for privacy. They seemed overly competitive and put a higher value on material wealth than I was used to. Navajos placed much more emphasis on a person's relations to family, clan, tribe, and the other inhabitants of the earth, both human and nonhuman, than on possessions. Everyone at home followed unwritten codes for behavior. We were taught to be humble and not to draw attention to ourselves, to favor cooperation over competition (so as not to make ourselves "look better" at another's expense or hurt someone's feelings), to value silence over words, to respect our elders, and to reserve our opinions until they were asked for.

In the first paragraph, Arviso emphasizes the physical details of the landscape, so her comparison and contrast relies on description. In the second paragraph, she is more analytical as she examines the behavior. Although she does not make a judgment directly, in both paragraphs she leads her readers to understand her conclusion that her New Mexico home — the landscape and its inhabitants — is what she prefers.

Comparisons and contrasts, whether as a full essay or a paragraph, can be organized in two ways: subject-by-subject or point by point. In a subject-by-subject analysis, the writer discusses all elements of one subject, then turns to another. For instance, a comparison and contrast of two presidential candidates by subject would present a full discussion of the first candidate, then the second candidate. A point-by-point analysis is organized around the specific points of a discussion. So, a point-by-point analysis of two presidential candidates might discuss their education, then their experience, then the vision each has for the country. Arviso uses point-by-point analysis as she first compares and contrasts the landscapes and then the cultures of both places.

## Classification and Division

It is important for readers as well as writers to be able to sort material or ideas into major categories. By answering the question, What goes together and why?

writers and readers can make connections between things that might otherwise seem unrelated. In some cases, the categories are ready-made, such as *single*, *married*, *divorced*, or *widowed*. In other cases, you might be asked either to analyze an essay that offers categories or to apply them. For instance, you might classify the books you're reading in class according to the categories Francis Bacon defined: "Some books are meant to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested."

Most of the time, a writer's task is to develop his or her own categories, to find a distinctive way of breaking down a larger idea or concept into parts. For example, in "Politics and the English Language" (p. 529), George Orwell sets up categories of imprecise and stale writing: "dying metaphors," "operators of verbal false limbs," "pretentious diction," and "meaningless words." He explains each in a paragraph with several examples and analysis. Classification and division is not the organization for his entire essay, however, because he is making a larger cause-and-effect argument that sloppy language leads to sloppy thinking; nevertheless, his classification scheme allows him to explore in a systematic way what he sees as problems.

In Amy Tan's essay "Mother Tongue" (p. 542) she classifies the "Englishes" she speaks into categories of public and private spheres:

Recently, I was made keenly aware of the different Englishes I do use. I was giving a talk to a large group of people; the same talk I had already given to half a dozen other groups. The nature of the talk was about my writing, my life, and my book, *The Joy Luck Club*. The talk was going along well enough, until I remembered one major difference that made the whole talk sound wrong. My mother was in the room. And it was perhaps the first time she had heard me give a lengthy speech, using the kind of English I have never used with her. I was saying things like "The intersection of memory upon imagination" and "There is an aspect of my fiction that related to thus-and-thus" — speech filled with carefully wrought grammatical phrases, buried, it suddenly seemed to me, with nominalized forms, past perfect tenses, conditional phrases, all the forms of standard English that I had learned in school and through books, the forms of English I did not use at home with my mother.

Just last week, I was walking down the street with my mother, and I again found myself conscious of the English I was using, the English I do use with her. We were talking about the price of new and used furniture and I heard myself saying this: "Not waste money that way." My husband was with us as well, and he didn't notice any switch in my Englishes. And then I realized why. It's because over the twenty years we've been together I've often used that same kind of English with him, and sometimes he even uses it with me. It has become our language of intimacy, a different sort of English that related to family talk, the language I grew up with.

Tan does not start out by identifying two categories, but as she describes them she classifies her “Englishes” as the English she learned in school and in books and the language of intimacy she learned at home.

## Definition

So many discussions depend upon definition. In examining the benefits of attending an Ivy League school, for instance, we need to define *Ivy League* before we can have a meaningful conversation. If we are evaluating a program’s success, we must define what qualifies as success. Before we can determine whether certain behavior is or is not *patriotic*, we must define the term. Ratings systems for movies must carefully define *violence*. To ensure that writers and their audiences are speaking the same language, definition may lay the foundation to establish common ground or identifying areas of conflict.

Defining a term is often the first step in a debate or disagreement. In some cases, definition is only a paragraph or two that clarify terms, but in other cases, the purpose of an entire essay is to establish a definition. In Jane Howard’s essay “In Search of the Good Family” (p. 283), she explores the meaning of *family*, a common enough term, yet one she redefines. She opens by identifying similar terms: “Call it a clan, call it a network, call it a tribe, call it a family.” She contrasts the traditional “blood family” with “new families . . . [that] consist of friends of the road, ascribed by chance, or friends of the heart, achieved by choice.” She develops her essay by first establishing the need we all have for a network of “kin” who may or may not be blood relatives. Then she analyzes ten characteristics that define a family. Here is one:

Good families prize their rituals. Nothing welds a family more than these. Rituals are vital especially for clans without histories because they evoke a past, imply a future, and hint at continuity. No line in the seder service at Passover reassures more than the last: “Next year in Jerusalem!” A clan becomes more of a clan each time it gathers to observe a fixed ritual (Christmas, birthdays, Thanksgiving, and so on), grieves at a funeral (anyone may come to most funerals; those who do declare their tribalness), and devises a new rite of its own. Equinox breakfasts can be at least as welding as Memorial Day parades. Several of my colleagues and I used to meet for lunch every Pearl Harbor Day, preferably to eat some politically neutral fare like smorgasbord, to “forgive” our only ancestrally Japanese friend, Irene Kubota Neves. For that and other things we became, and remain, a sort of family.

Howard explains the purpose of rituals in her opening paragraph and then provides specific examples to explain what she means by *rituals*. She offers such a variety of them that her readers cannot fail to understand the flexibility and openness she associates with her definition of *family*.

## Cause and Effect

Analyzing the causes that lead to a certain effect or, conversely, the effects that result from a cause is a powerful foundation for argument. Rachel Carson’s case for the unintended and unexpected effects of the pesticide DDT in *Silent Spring* is legendary (p. 798). Although she uses a number of different methods to organize and develop her analysis, this simple — or not so simple — causal link is the basis of everything that follows. On a similar topic, Terry Tempest Williams in “The Clan of One-Breasted Women” (p. 816) proceeds from the effect she sees — the breast cancer that has affected the women in her family — to argue that the cause is environmental.

Since causal analysis depends upon crystal clear logic, it is important to carefully trace a chain of cause and effect and to recognize possible contributing causes. You don’t want to jump to the conclusion that there is only one cause or one result, nor do you want to mistake an effect for an underlying cause. In “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (p. 260), for instance, Martin Luther King Jr. points out that his critics had mistaken a cause for an effect: the protests of the civil rights movement were not the cause of violence but the effect of segregation.

Cause and effect is often signaled by a *why* in the title or the opening paragraph. In “I Know Why the Caged Bird Cannot Read” (p. 89), Francine Prose sets out what she believes are the causes for high school students’ lack of enthusiasm for reading: “Given the dreariness with which literature is taught in many American classrooms, it seems miraculous that any sentient teenager would view reading as a source of pleasure.” In the following paragraph, she explains the positive effects of reading classical literature:

Great novels can help us master the all-too-rare skill of tolerating — of being able to hold in mind — ambiguity and contradiction. Jay Gatsby has a shady past, but he’s also sympathetic. Huck Finn is a liar, but we come to love him. A friend’s student once wrote that Alice Munro’s characters weren’t people he’d choose to hang out with but that reading her work always made him feel “a little less petty and judgmental.” Such benefits are denied to the young reader exposed only to books with banal, simple-minded moral equations as well as to the students encouraged to come up with reductive, wrong-headed readings of multilayered texts.

In her analysis, Prose argues for the positive effects of reading canonical literature, and she provides several examples. She concludes by pointing out that teaching less challenging works, or teaching more challenging works without acknowledging their complexity, has the effect of encouraging unclear or superficial thinking.

## • ASSIGNMENT •

Reread Jody Heyman's essay "We Can Afford to Give Parents a Break" (p. 6), and discuss the patterns of development she uses. Which of these patterns prevails in the overall essay? Which does she use in specific sections or paragraphs?

## When Rhetoric Misses the Mark

Not every attempt at effective rhetoric hits its mark. Actually, whether a speech or letter or essay is rhetorically effective is often a matter of opinion. When former president Bill Clinton addressed the nation on August 17, 1998, he described his relationship with Monica Lewinsky as "not appropriate." Some found the speech effective, while others thought he had not been sufficiently apologetic or even contrite. (Audio and full text of the speech is at <bedfordsmartins.com/languagecomp>.)

In 2006, at the funeral of Coretta Scott King, widow of Martin Luther King Jr., a number of those who eulogized her also spoke about racism, the futility of the war in Iraq, and military spending that exceeded funding for the poor. Some listeners criticized such discussions, arguing that a funeral held in a church should acknowledge only the life and accomplishments of the deceased; others asserted that any occasion honoring the commitment of Mrs. King and her husband to racial and economic justice was an appropriate venue for social criticism. A famous example of humorously ineffective rhetoric is the proposal of Mr. Collins to the high-spirited heroine Elizabeth Bennet in the nineteenth-century novel *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen. Mr. Collins, a foolish and syco-phantic minister, stands to inherit the Bennet estate; thus he assumes that any of the Bennet sisters, including Elizabeth, will be grateful for his offer of marriage. So he crafts his offer as a business proposal that is a series of reasons. Following is a slightly abridged version of Mr. Collins's proposal:

My reasons for marrying are, first, that I think it a right thing for every clergyman in easy circumstances (like myself) to set the example of matrimony in his parish. Secondly, that I am convinced it will add very greatly to my happiness; and thirdly — which perhaps I ought to have mentioned earlier, that it is the particular advice and recommendation of the very noble lady whom I have the honour of calling patroness. . . . But the fact is, that being, as I am, to inherit this estate after the death of your honoured father (who, however, may live many years longer), I could not satisfy myself without resolving to chuse a wife from among his daughters, that the loss to them might be as little as possible, when the melancholy event takes place — which, however, as I have already said, may not be for several years. This has been my motive,

my fair cousin, and I flatter myself it will not sink me in your esteem. And now nothing remains for me but to assure you in the most animated language of the violence of my affection. To fortune I am perfectly indifferent, and shall make no demand of that nature on your father, since I am well aware that it could not be complied with; and that one thousand pounds in the 4 per cents, which will not be yours till after your mother's decease, is all that you may ever be entitled to. On that head, therefore, I shall be uniformly silent; and you may assure yourself that no ungenerous reproach shall ever pass my lips when we are married.

Mr. Collins appeals to logos with a sequence of reasons that support his intent to marry: ministers should be married, marriage will add to his happiness, and his patroness wants him to marry. Of course, these are all advantages to himself. Ultimately, he claims that he can assure Elizabeth "in the most animated language of the violence of [his] affection," yet he offers no language at all about his emotional attachment. Finally, as if to refute the counterargument that she would not reap many benefits from the proposed alliance, he reminds her that her financial future is grim unless she accepts his offer and promises to be "uniformly silent" rather than to remind her of that fact once they are married.

Where did he go wrong? Without devaluing the wry humor of Austen in her portrayal of Mr. Collins, we can conclude that at the very least he failed to understand his audience. He offers reasons for marriage that would have little appeal to Elizabeth, who does not share his businesslike and self-serving assumptions. No wonder she can hardly wait to extricate herself from the exchange or that he responds with shocked indignation.

Understanding your audience is just as important in visual texts, especially ones meant to be humorous. Consider the accompanying cartoon by Roz Chast that was published in the *New Yorker*. Its humor depends upon the artist's confidence that her audience is familiar with popular culture, Greek mythology, and the Bible. Chast's point is that the ancient legends and stories many of us hold sacred might be considered as sensational as the highly dramatic, often amazing headlines of the *National Enquirer*; however, this would be lost on someone unfamiliar with her three sources. She even pokes gentle fun at the publication by dating it May 17, 8423, B.C. (even though it costs a rather contemporary fifty cents).

The headline "Woman Turns into Pillar of Salt" alludes to the story in Genesis of Lot's wife defying warnings not to look back on the destruction of the kingdom of Sodom and Gomorrah. The reference to the man living in the whale's stomach is to the biblical story of Jonah. The bottom left story alludes to the ancient Greek myth that Athena sprang fully grown (and in full armor) from the head of her father Zeus. And the headline on the bottom right refers to Cerberus, the three-headed dog who guards the entrance to Hades.

The cartoon would lack its amusing punch if the audience did not understand the references to the popular newspaper that specializes in sensational stories, as well as characters and stories from the Bible and Greek mythology.



Lord Spencer selected a burial site on an island in an ornamental lake known as The Oval within Althorp Park's Pleasure Garden. A path with 36 oak trees, marking each year of her life, leads to the Oval. Four black swans swim in the lake, symbolizing sentinels guarding the island. In the water there are several water lilies. White roses and lilies were Diana's favorite flowers. On the southern verge of the Round Oval sits the Summerhouse, previously in the gardens of Admiralty House, London, and now serving as a memorial to Princess Diana. An ancient arboretum stands nearby, which contains trees planted by Prince William and Prince Harry, other members of her family and the princess herself. . . .



## Close Reading: The Art and Craft of Analysis

**D**o you ever wonder how your teachers can teach the same books year after year and not be bored by them? One reason is that the works we study in school have many layers of meaning, revealing something new each time we read them. That quality is what distinguishes them from literary potato chips, writings that are satisfying — even delicious — but offer little nutritional value. A mystery or a romance may absorb us completely, but usually we do not read it a second time.

How do you find the “nutritional value” in the books, stories, essays, and poems you study in school? Your teacher may lead you through a work, putting it in context, focusing your attention on themes and techniques, asking for a response. Or, you might do these things yourself through a process called **close reading**, or analysis of a text. When you read closely, you develop an understanding of a text that is based first on the words themselves and then on the larger ideas those words suggest. That is, you start with the small details, and as you think about them, you discover how they affect the text's larger meaning. When you *write* about close reading, you start with the larger meaning you've discovered and use the small details — the language itself — to support your interpretation.

As with any skill, close reading becomes easier with practice, but it's important to remember that we use it unconsciously — and instantaneously — every day as we respond to people and situations. We are aware of the interaction of subject, speaker, and audience (remember the rhetorical triangle in Chapter 1?), and we instinctively respond to the context and purpose of our interactions. We also consider style: body language, gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice, volume, sentence structure, **colloquialisms**, vocabulary, and more. And when we recount a conversation or describe a situation, we often analyze it in the same way we would write about a text we have read closely.

Take a look at the concluding paragraphs of “Where Nothing Says Everything,” an essay by Suzanne Berne about visiting Ground Zero, the site of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, several months after September 11,



2001. In the essay, which appeared in the *New York Times* travel section in April 2002, Berne writes that she had trouble getting a ticket to the official viewing platform, so she went into a deli that advertised a view of Ground Zero from its second floor. She brought her sandwich upstairs to a table next to a large window.

And there, at last, I got my ticket to the disaster.

I could see not just into the pit now, but also its access ramp, which trucks had been traveling up and down since I had arrived that morning. Gathered along the ramp were firefighters in their black helmets and black coats. Slowly they lined up, and it became clear that this was an honor guard, and that someone's remains were being carried up the ramp toward the open door of an ambulance.

Everyone in the dining room stopped eating. Several people stood up, whether out of respect or to see better, I don't know. For a moment, everything paused.

Then the day flowed back into itself. Soon I was outside once more, joining the tide of people washing around the site. Later, as I huddled with a little crowd on the viewing platform, watching people scrawl their names or write "God Bless America" on the plywood walls, it occurred to me that a form of repopulation was taking effect, with so many visitors to this place, thousands of visitors, all of us coming to see the wide emptiness where so many were lost. And by the act of our visiting — whether we are motivated by curiosity or horror or reverence or grief, or by something confusing that combines them all — that space fills up again.

Using what you learned in Chapter 1, you can probably identify the passage's context and purpose: the writer, not a New Yorker, visits Ground Zero and is awed by the emptiness that was once the World Trade Center; her purpose is to describe the experience to readers who seven months later still feel the immediacy of that September morning.

You can analyze the passage through the rhetorical triangle, considering the interaction of subject, speaker, and audience. Berne's audience, readers of the travel section of a national newspaper, may be planning their own visit and thus may be interested in her personal experience. You can also consider the ways Berne appeals to ethos, pathos, and logos. She establishes ethos by actually going to Ground Zero, not simply musing about it; her emotion-laden subject appeals to pathos; and in an original way, she uses logos, or logic, to show that visitors to the site are repopulating the area that was decimated on September 11.

And there's more. Using close-reading techniques, we can also examine Berne's style. Doing so provides information about the choices she makes at the word and sentence levels, some of which we may use to further analyze this piece.

## Analyzing Style

Just as we pay attention to more than the spoken words during a conversation, when we read closely, we look beyond the words on the page. And just as we notice body language, gestures, facial expressions, and volume in our conversations, we can understand a text better by examining its **tone**, sentence structure, and vocabulary. These elements make up the **style** of the written piece and help us to discover layers of meaning. Style contributes to the meaning, purpose, and effect of a text, whether it is visual or written.

Look back at the excerpt from Berne's essay. Here are some questions about style that might come to mind based on your first impressions of the passage:

- Why is the first paragraph one sentence?
- In that paragraph, why does Berne call the empty space "the disaster"?
- Why does the third sentence begin with "Gathered" rather than "Firefighters"?
- What examples of figurative language appear in the fourth paragraph?
- Does the word *huddled* in the fourth paragraph remind you of anything else you've read?
- What is the effect of the dashes in the final sentence?

You may notice that these questions fall into two categories: the choice of words and how the words are arranged. We call the choice of words **diction** and the arrangement of words **syntax**. Sometimes we talk about style as a matter of *tropes* and *schemes*. A **trope** is essentially artful diction. A trope could be a **metaphor**, a **simile**, **personification**, and **hyperbole**. A **scheme** is artful syntax. **Parallelisms**, **juxtapositions**, and **anitheses** are common schemes.

Here are some questions to ask when you analyze diction:

1. Which of the important words in the passage (verbs, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs) are general and abstract? Which are specific and concrete?
2. Are the important words formal, informal, colloquial, or slang?
3. Are some words nonliteral or figurative, creating **figures of speech** such as metaphors?

When you analyze syntax, you might ask:

1. What is the order of the parts of the sentence? Is it the usual (subject-verb-object), or is it inverted?
2. Which part of speech is more prominent — nouns or verbs?
3. What are the sentences like? Are they **periodic** (moving toward something important at the end) or **cumulative** (adding details that support an important idea in the beginning of the sentence)?
4. How does the sentence connect its words, phrases, and clauses?

These first-impression questions can be categorized as shown in the accompanying table.

FIRST-IMPRESSION QUESTIONS		
	DICTION	SYNTAX
Why is the first paragraph one sentence?		✓
In that paragraph, why does Berne call the empty space “the disaster”?	✓	
Why does the third sentence begin with “Gathered” rather than “Firefighters”?		✓
What examples of figurative language appear in the fourth paragraph?	✓	
Does the word <i>huddled</i> in the fourth paragraph remind you of anything else you’ve read?	✓	
What is the effect of the dashes in the final sentence?		✓

If you can answer these questions, you will be well on your way toward an analysis of an author’s style and how that style is part of the text’s message.

## Talking with the Text

By now, you may be wondering how to generate your own questions to do a close reading. Just start by paying close attention to the choices a writer makes in the way he or she connects subject, speaker, and audience, as well as the choices the writer makes about style. Remember that style is a subset of rhetoric—it is a means of persuasion.

Let’s look at three different approaches to close reading a passage by Joan Didion about California’s Santa Ana winds from her essay “Los Angeles Notebook.” As you interact with the text, keep in mind that you’re not only identifying techniques and strategies, but you are also analyzing their effect. In other words, how do Didion’s choices in diction and syntax help her achieve a particular purpose? To answer this, you must determine what the purpose is, what the choices are, and what effect those choices create.

There is something uneasy in the Los Angeles air this afternoon, some unnatural stillness, some tension. What it means is that tonight a Santa Ana will begin to blow, a hot wind from the northeast whining down through the

Cajon and San Geronimo Passes, blowing up sand storms out along Route 66, drying the hills and the nerves to flash point. For a few days now we will see smoke back in the canyons, and hear sirens in the night. I have neither heard nor read that a Santa Ana is due, but I know it, and almost everyone I have seen today knows it too. We know it because we feel it. The baby frets. The maid sulks. I rekindle a warning argument with the telephone company, then cut my losses and lie down, given over to whatever it is in the air. To live with the Santa Ana is to accept, consciously or unconsciously, a deeply mechanistic view of human behavior.

I recall being told, when I first moved to Los Angeles and was living on an isolated beach, that the Indians would throw themselves into the sea when the bad wind blew. I could see why. The Pacific turned ominously glossy during a Santa Ana period, and one woke in the night troubled not only by the peacocks screaming in the olive trees but by the eerie absence of surf. The heat was surreal. The sky had a yellow cast, the kind of light sometimes called “earthquake weather.” My only neighbor would not come out of her house for days, and there were no lights at night, and her husband roamed the place with a machete. One day he would tell me that he had heard a trespasser, the next a rattlesnake.

“On nights like that,” Raymond Chandler once wrote about the Santa Ana, “every booze party ends in a fight. Meek little wives feel the edge of the carving knife and study their husbands’ necks. Anything can happen.” That was the kind of wind it was. I did not know then that there was any basis for the effect it had on all of us, but it turns out to be another of those cases in which science bears out folk wisdom. The Santa Ana, which is named for one of the canyons it rushes through, is a *foehn* wind, like the *foehn* of Austria and Switzerland and the *hamsin* of Israel. There are a number of persistent malevolent winds, perhaps the best known of which are the *mistral* of France and the Mediterranean *sirocco*, but a *foehn* wind has distinct characteristics: it occurs on the leeward slope of a mountain range and, although the air begins as a cold mass, it is warmed as it comes down the mountain and appears finally as a hot dry wind. Whenever and wherever *foehn* blows, doctors hear about headaches and nausea and allergies, about “nervousness,” about “depression.” In Los Angeles some teachers do not attempt to conduct formal classes during a Santa Ana, because the children become unmanageable. In Switzerland the suicide rate goes up during the *foehn*, and in the courts of some Swiss cantons the wind is considered a mitigating circumstance for crime. Surgeons are said to watch the wind, because blood does not clot normally during a *foehn*. A few years ago an Israeli physicist discovered that not only during such winds, but for the ten or twelve hours which precede them, the air carries an unusually high ratio of positive to negative ions. No one seems to know exactly why that should be; some talk about friction and others suggest solar disturbances. In any case the positive ions are

there, and what an excess of positive ions does, in the simplest terms, is make people unhappy. One cannot get much more mechanistic than that.

## Annotation

One technique you can use is **annotation**. Annotating a text requires reading with a pen or pencil in hand. If you are not allowed to write in your book, write on Post-it notes. As you read, circle words you don't know, or write them on the Post-it notes. Identify main ideas — **thesis statements**, **topic sentences** — and also words, phrases, or sentences that appeal to you or that you don't understand. Look for figures of speech, or tropes, such as metaphors, similes, and personification — as well as **imagery** and detail. If you don't know the technical term for something, just describe it. For example, if you come across an adjective-and-noun combination that seems contradictory, such as "meager abundance," and you don't know that the term for it is **oxymoron**, you might still note the juxtaposition of two words that have opposite meanings. Use the margins or Post-it notes to ask questions or to comment on what you have read. In short, as you read, listen to the voice in your head, and write down what that voice is saying. Following is an annotated version of the Didion passage:

There is something uneasy in the Los Angeles air this afternoon, some unnatural stillness, some tension. What it means is that tonight a Santa Ana will begin to blow, a hot wind from the northeast whining down through the Cajon and San Geronimo Passes, blowing up sand storms out along Route 66, drying the hills and the nerves to flash point. For a few days now we will see smoke back in the canyons, and hear sirens in the night. I have neither heard nor read that a Santa Ana is due, but I know it, and almost everyone I have seen today knows it too. We know it because we feel it. The short baby frets. The maid sulks. I rekindle a warning argument with the telephone company, then cut my losses and lie down, given over to whatever it is in the air. To live with the Santa Ana is to accept, consciously or unconsciously, a deeply mechanistic view of human behavior.

I recall being told, when I first moved to Los Angeles and was living on an isolated beach, that the Indians would throw themselves into the sea when the bad wind blew. I could see why. The Pacific turned ominously glossy during a Santa Ana

period, and one woke in the night troubled not only by the peacocks screaming in the olive trees but by the eerie absence of surf. The heat was surreal. The sky had a yellow cast the kind of light sometimes called "earthquake weather." My only neighbor would not come out of her house for days, and there were no lights at night, and her husband roamed the place with a machete. One day he would tell me that he had heard a repasser the next at attle snake.

"On nights like that," Raymond Chandler once wrote about the Santa Ana, "every booze party ends in a fight. Meek little wives feel the edge of the carving knife and study their husbands' necks. Anything can happen." That was the kind of wind it was. I did not know then that there was any basis for the effect it had on all of us, but it turns out to be another of those cases in which science beats out folk wisdom. The Santa Ana, which is named for one of the canyons it rushes through, is a foehn wind, like the foehn of Austria and Switzerland and the hamisin of Israel. There are a number of persistent malevolent winds, perhaps the best known of which are the mistral of France and the Mediterranean sirocco, but a foehn wind has distinct characteristics: it occurs on the leeward slope of a mountain range and, although the air begins as a cold mass, it is warmed as it comes down the mountain and appears finally as a hot dry wind. Whenever and wherever foehn blows, doctors hear about headaches and nausea and allergies, about "nervousness," about "depression." In Los Angeles some teachers do not attempt to conduct formal classes during a Santa Ana, because the children become unmanageable. In Switzerland the suicide rate goes up during the foehn, and in the courts of some Swiss cantons the wind is considered a mitigating circumstance for crime. Surgeons are said to watch the wind, because blood does not clot normally during a foehn. A few years ago an Israeli physicist discovered that not only during such winds, but for the ten or twelve hours which precede them, the air carries an unusually high ratio of positive to negative ions. No one seems to know exactly why that should

At least 7 scientific facts

Good description

More anxiety words

Look up name

Personal anecdote

Wild images

Seemingly contradictory sources of information

Why in quote

be; some talk about fiction and others suggest solar disturbances. In any case the positive ions are there, and what an excess of positive ions does, in the simplest terms, is make people unhappy. One cannot get much more mechanistic than that.

### Dialectical Journal

Another way to interact with a text is to keep a **dialectical journal**, or double-entry notebook. Dialectical journals use columns to represent visually the conversation between the text and the reader. Let's look at a dialectical journal set up with note taking on the left (in this case, sections of the text you think are important) and with note making on the right (your comments).

NOTE TAKING	PARA.	NOTE MAKING
What it means is that tonight a Santa Ana will begin to blow, a hot wind from the northeast whining down through the Cajon and San Geronimo Passes, blowing up sand storms out along Route 66, drying the hills and the nerves to flash point.	1	"drying the hills and the nerves" — example of zeugma, makes connection between nature and human behavior. Long sentence <i>whining</i> to the end — a "flash point" — like the winds "whining" down the passes and causing humans to act crazy.
"On nights like that," Raymond Chandler once wrote about the Santa Ana, "every booze party ends in a fight. Meek little wives feel the edge of the carving knife and study their husbands' necks. Anything can happen."	3	Chandler, who wrote crime fiction, was known for his hard-boiled style and cynicism. His quotation offers another image that supports Didion's view of the Santa Ana winds' effects on human behavior.
Whenever and wherever <i>foehn</i> blows, doctors hear about headaches and nausea and allergies, about "nervousness," about "depression." In Los Angeles some teachers do not attempt to conduct formal classes during a Santa Ana, because the children become unmanageable. In Switzerland the	3	These are impressive reports, from all over the world, and they make Didion's argument about the effects of winds on behavior convincing. They're basically a list — they could almost be bullet points.

NOTE TAKING	PARA.	NOTE MAKING
suicide rate goes up during the <i>foehn</i> , and in the courts of some Swiss cantons the wind is considered a mitigating circumstance for crime. Surgeons are said to watch the wind, because blood does not clot normally during a <i>foehn</i> .		
A few years ago an Israeli physicist discovered that not only during such winds, but for the ten or twelve hours which precede them, the air carries an unusually high ratio of positive to negative ions.	3	Sounds pretty scientific; an Israeli physicist sounds like an expert. Another scientific fact for Didion's argument.

Breaking the text into small sections helps you notice the details in Didion's writing: specific word and sentence choices. For example, she connects two seemingly different things in the same grammatical construction ("drying the hills and the nerves"; the technical name for this figure of speech is *zeugma*). She also alludes to crime writer Raymond Chandler, to facts, even to some scientific data. Collecting these bits of information from the text and considering their impression on you prepares you to answer the following questions about Didion's style: What effect is she striving for? How does the effect serve the purpose of her writing?

### Graphic Organizer

A third way to organize your thoughts about a specific text is to use a **graphic organizer**. Your teacher may divide the text for you, or you may divide it yourself as you begin your analysis. Use the paragraph divisions in the text as natural breaking points, or perhaps consider smaller sections that reveal interesting stylistic choices. Although a graphic organizer takes time to complete, it lets you gather a great deal of information to analyze as you prepare to write an essay.

The accompanying graphic organizer below asks you to copy something the writer has said, then restate it in your own words; next you analyze how the writer makes the point and what the effect on the reader is. Note that you become increasingly analytical as you move across the columns to the right.

QUOTATION	PARAPHRASE OR SUMMARIZE	RHETORICAL STRATEGY OR STYLE ELEMENT	EFFECT OR FUNCTION
<p>There is something uneasy in the Los Angeles air this afternoon, some unnatural stillness, some tension. What it means is that tonight a Santa Ana will begin to blow, a hot wind from the northeast whining down through the Cajon and San Geronimo Passes, blowing up sand storms out along Route 66, drying the hills and the nerves to flash point. For a few days now we will see smoke back in the canyons, and hear sirens in the night. I have neither heard nor read that a Santa Ana is due, but I know it, and almost everyone I have seen today knows it too. We know it because we feel it. The baby frets. The maid sulks. I rekindle a waning argument with the telephone company, then cut my losses and lie down, given over to whatever it is in the air. To live with the Santa Ana is to accept, consciously or unconsciously, a deeply mechanistic view of human behavior.</p>	<p>The winds are creepy. They bring sand storms and cause fires. People know they're coming without being told because babies and maids act strange. The speaker picks a fight and then gives up. The Santa Ana winds make us aware that human behavior can be explained in terms of physical causes and processes.</p>	<p>Personification: the wind whines</p> <p>Cumulative sentence</p> <p>Two short sentences: "The baby frets. The maid sulks."</p> <p>"rekindle"</p>	<p>Giving the wind a human quality makes it even more threatening.</p> <p>Makes her point by accumulating details about what it means that the Santa Ana is beginning to blow.</p> <p>Those simple sentences reduce human behavior to irrefutable evidence. We can't argue with what we see so clearly.</p> <p>Though she's talking about restarting an argument with the phone company, the word makes us think of starting a fire, like the wind does up in the hills.</p>
<p>I recall being told, when I first moved to Los Angeles and was living on an isolated beach, that the Indians would throw themselves into the sea when the bad wind blew. I could see why. The Pacific turned ominously glossy during a Santa Ana period, and one woke in the night troubled not only by the peacocks screaming in the olive trees but by the eerie absence of surf. The heat was surreal. The sky had a yellow cast, the kind of light sometimes called "earthquake weather." My only neighbor would not come out of her house for days, and there were no lights at night, and her husband roamed the place with a machete. One day he would tell me that he had heard a trespasser, the next a rattlesnake.</p>	<p>Didion talks about her early experiences with the winds, plus the folklore about them. She mentions things that seem weird — peacocks screeching and a very quiet ocean. She says her neighbors are strange too; one stays indoors, and the other walks around with a big knife.</p>	<p>Subordinate clause in the middle of that first sentence: "when I first moved to Los Angeles and was living on an isolated beach."</p> <p>"peacocks screaming in the olive trees"</p> <p>Compound sentence: My only neighbor would not come out of her house for days, and there were no lights at night, and her husband roamed the place with a machete.</p> <p>"machete"</p>	<p>The clause accentuates Didion's isolation and because it's so long almost makes her experience more important than the Indians who threw themselves into the ocean.</p> <p>Kind of an upside-down image. Peacocks are usually regal and elegant; these are screaming. Also olive trees are associated with peace (the olive branch). Supports the idea that the Santa Ana turns everything upside down. "And" as the coordinating conjunction makes the wife hiding and the husband with the machete equally important.</p> <p>"Machete" is associated with revolutions in banana republics, vigilantes. Suggests danger.</p>

(continued on next page)

QUOTATION	PARAPHRASE OR SUMMARIZE	RHETORICAL STRATEGY OR STYLE ELEMENT	EFFECT OR FUNCTION
<p>"On nights like that," Raymond Chandler once wrote about the Santa Ana, "every booze party ends in a fight. Meek little wives feel the edge of the carving knife and study their husbands' necks. Anything can happen." That was the kind of wind it was. I did not know then that there was any basis for the effect it had on all of us, but it turns out to be another of those cases in which science bears out folk wisdom.</p>	<p>Didion quotes a writer who describes the effects of the wind as causing women to want to kill their husbands. She says that folklore sometimes has a basis in science.</p>	<p>Allusion to Raymond Chandler</p>	<p>Chandler, who wrote crime fiction, was known for his hard-boiled style and cynical views. The allusion to Chandler helps create the ominous tone.</p>
<p>The Santa Ana, which is named for one of the canyons it rushes through, is a <i>foehn</i> wind, like the <i>foehn</i> of Austria and Switzerland and the <i>hamsin</i> of Israel . . . A few years ago an Israeli physicist discovered that not only during such winds, but for the ten or twelve hours which precede them, the air carries an unusually high ratio of positive to negative ions.</p>	<p>This section gives scientific facts about the Santa Ana wind, including its generic name, <i>foehn</i>. Didion names other winds like it in other parts of the world, but says the <i>foehn</i> has its own characteristics. She names some of the effects the <i>foehn</i> has on people in various places.</p>	<p>Complex sentence: "There are a number of persistent malevolent winds, perhaps the best known of which are the <i>mistral</i> of France and the Mediterranean <i>sirocco</i>, but a <i>foehn</i> wind has distinct characteristics: it occurs on the leeward slope of a mountain range and, although the air begins as a cold mass, it is warmed as it comes down the mountain and appears finally as a hot dry wind."</p>	<p>The details accumulate, ending in "hot dry wind" to create a picture of the "persistent malevolent wind."</p>

The following essay analyzes how Joan Didion creates a sense of foreboding that, in turn, helps her to develop her argument about the winds' effects on human behavior.

### Joan Didion's Santa Ana Winds: A Mechanistic View of Nature

by Jane Knobler

The ominous description of Los Angeles preceding the arrival of the Santa Ana wind, juxtaposed with a scientific-sounding explanation develops Joan Didion's view that human behavior is basically a result of mechanics. She recreates the tense, stifling atmosphere that precedes the wind and argues that its effect on the people of Los Angeles can be explained by science. The eerie atmosphere, like a 1930s detective film based on a Raymond Chandler novel, highlights the strangeness of a wind affecting behavior even before the wind has begun to blow.

The effect of Didion's diction in the first part of the essay is to create foreboding; terror is just over the horizon. The wind cranks the reeves to a "flash point," causing arguments to be "reckinable[!]", one needs a "machete" for protection. The reader is reminded of the ease with which disaster visits the West Coast. Forest fires, mudslides, snakebite, murder can happen in a moment.

The word choice in the second part of the essay is more scientific; Didion provides names for these dangerous winds as well as statistics and facts about the "suicide rate," "unmanageable" children, and a "mitigating circumstance for crime." She supports her view that living in Los Angeles requires an understanding that human behavior is often out of our control. The dark atmosphere the Santa Ana wind creates has concrete, dire consequences that can be reported in terms of misbehavior and death. The vivid description of the impending terror that precedes the Santa Ana wind is highlighted when it is followed by the facts about the evil wind.

Didion's choice and accumulation of detail also heighten the sense of foreboding. The coming of the wind has negative effects on the baby who "frets" and the maid who "sulks"; it causes the "eerie absence of surf." The world is in an unnatural state. One cannot trust one's expectations or perceptions. The long cumulative sentence that describes the "persistent malevolent winds" begins by naming other winds, moves to the wind's beginning as a "cold mass," and ends with the increasingly frightening "hot dry wind." Those last three words reinforce what is "malevolent" in the beginning of the sentence. The wind's "positive ions" seen at first a scientific explanation, but a second look shows them to be another perversion of nature. Wind should be cool; this wind blows hot. Something positive should bring happiness. These positive ions make us unhappy. Nature is a force to be reckoned with; all of our good intentions cannot stand up to the Santa Ana wind.

The evil Santa Ana winds have a negative effect on human behavior. When they are coming, the only course is to take to one's bed. Otherwise, one may risk behaving

badly or becoming the victim of someone else's bad behavior. It won't be our fault. It will be the fault of the Santa Ana winds.

### • ASSIGNMENT •

The following observation of the wind comes from the 1545 book *Toxophilus* by English scholar Roger Ascham, who served as tutor to Princess Elizabeth, later Elizabeth I. Although Ascham, like Didion, contemplates the effect of unusual winds, the writing is vastly different in some measure because of the more than 400 years between the pieces. Use one of the close reading techniques we've discussed — annotation, dialectical journal, or graphic organizer — to analyze the Ascham text. Explain how the technique you selected helped to make Ascham more accessible to a twenty-first-century reader.

To see the wind, with a man his eyes, it is impossible, the nature of it is so fine, and subtle; yet this experience of the wind had I once myself, and that was in the great snow that fell four years ago: I rode in the highway betwixt Topcliff-upon-Swale, and Borrowe Bridge, the way being somewhat trodden afore, by wayfaring men. The fields on both sides were plain and lay almost yard deep with snow, the night afore had been a little frost, so that the snow was hard and crusted above. That morning the sun shone bright and clear, the wind was whistling aloft, and sharp according to the time of the year. The snow in the highway lay loose and trodden with horse feet: so as the wind blew, it took the loose snow with it, and made it so slide upon the snow in the field which was hard and crusted by reason of the frost overnight, that thereby I might see very well the whole nature of the wind as it blew that day. And I had a great delight and pleasure to mark it, which maked me now for better to remember it. Sometime the wind would be not past two yards broad, and so it would carry the snow as far as I could see. Another time the snow would blow over half the field at once. Sometime the snow would tumble softly, by and by it would fly wonderful fast. And this I perceived also, that the wind goeth by streams and not whole together. For I should see one stream within a score on me, then the space of two score no snow would stir, but after so much quantity of ground, another stream of snow at the same very time should be carried likewise, but not equally. For the one would stand still when the other flew apace, and so continue sometime swifter, sometime slower, sometime broader, sometime narrower, as far as I could see. Nor it flew not straight, but sometime it crooked this way, sometime that way, and sometime it ran round about in a compass. And sometime the snow would be lift clean from the ground and up into the air, and by and by it would be all clapped to the ground as though there had been no wind at all, straightway it would rise and fly again.

And that which was the most marvel of all, at one time two drifts of snow flew, the one out of the West into the East, the other out of the North into the

East: and I saw two winds by reason of the snow the one cross over the other, as it had been two highways. And again I should hear the wind blow in the air, when nothing was stirred at the ground. And when all was still where I rode, not very far from me the snow should be lifted wonderfully. This experience made me more marvel of the nature of the wind, than it made me cunning in the knowledge of the wind: but yet thereby I learned perfectly that it is no marvel at all though men in a wind lose their length in shooting, seeing so many ways the wind is so variable in blowing.

## Analyzing a Visual Text

Many of the same tools of rhetorical analysis and close reading that we have practiced on written texts are also useful for detecting the underlying messages in visual texts, such as advertisements. Let's look at the accompanying ad for the Dodge Durango.

The rhetorical triangle still applies: what are the relationships among the text's subject (a powerful sport utility vehicle), its audience (the potential SUV buyer), and the speaker (in this case, the artwork and words)? The advertisement appeals to ethos in the text at the top left: it banks on associations to Dodge cars and trucks — power, dependability, toughness. Its appeal to pathos plays on our notion of the cheeseburger as a guilty pleasure; we're meant to associate tofu with wimpy, energy-efficient cars. As for logos, the Durango is affordable; it makes sense to own one. Why not enjoy life, drive an affordable SUV, and eat big, juicy cheeseburgers?

When we analyze a visual text, we still look at the words, both individually and in the way they are placed on the page. And we study the images the same way.

Look at the text on the top left part of the ad.

**DODGE DURANGO.** This is the most affordable SUV with a V-8. Dodge Durango. With nearly four tons of towing, this baby carries around chunks of those wimpy wanna-bes in its tail pipe.

Note the aggressive tone. How is that sense of aggressiveness created? It may be the repetition of "Dodge Durango" with its hard consonant sounds; it may be the prepositional phrase announcing that the vehicle can tow four tons. It's a "baby" that carries "chunks" of its competitors in its tailpipe. The use of the colloquialism "baby" contrasts nicely with the image of the car as a predator eating the competition. The owner of a Dodge Durango will be the kind of person whose car is his or her "baby" and who is the leader of the pack, not one "of those wimpy wanna-bes."

The Dodge logo — a ram's head — and the slogan "grab life by the horns" appears at the top right of the ad. Both the image and the words play with the