

part 1

An Overview of College Writing



chapter 1

Reading and Responding to Texts in the 21st Century

This book will help you read and write critically in college and beyond. In academic courses and the workplace, many critical reading and writing skills—such as the ability to analyze, critique, and synthesize information—are seemingly timeless; however, to gain a voice in the 21st-century information age, you must also master multiple literacies and technological skills and learn how to apply these skills in new and developing contexts. College assignments, work challenges, and individual lifestyles are diverse, rapidly changing, technology driven, and increasingly global. Changes in technology and society itself are transforming the way we read and respond to texts.

Today, you are composing more than ever before and in numerous environments in print and online. In all likelihood, you are texting, tweeting, and blogging (or at least reading others' blogs); maintaining Web sites of your own; creating and uploading podcasts; sharing video clips on YouTube or audio files through peer-to-peer programs; and interacting in multiple formats on social networking sites. And of course you are making electronic presentations in the classroom while still using pen and paper to fill out blue books, take at least some of your class notes, or make journal entries. In brief, your literacy environment is far more complex than in previous generations.

According to the National Council of Teachers of English, a literate person in the 21st century must be able to

- develop proficiency with the tools of technology;
- build relationships with others to pose and solve problems collaboratively and cross-culturally;
- design and share information for global communities to meet a variety of purposes;
- manage, analyze, and synthesize multiple streams of simultaneous information;
- create, critique, analyze, and evaluate multimedia texts; and
- attend to the ethical responsibilities required by these complex environments.

Clearly you need a wide range of competencies and abilities to succeed as a reader and writer in this changing and challenging world, and the way you write will often determine your academic, vocational, and personal success. In short, you need a *literate identity*—a voice attuned to the democratic sphere and global society.

Composition in all its forms—from written works to audio and visual projects—is the essence of academic life, which typically involves the reading of and responding to challenging texts. As a 21st-century college student, you will be swimming in an ocean of discourse; and you will need to approach texts with both focus and skills that go beyond casual reading, the type you may do for leisure or escapism. Even in courses in

which a preponderance of work involves learning forms of knowledge and new technologies, such as computer science, mathematics, or biochemistry, you are sure to find a healthy amount of reading that will supplement any other work done in the classroom or laboratory. And increasingly the read-write universe that awaits you will necessitate an interactive approach fostered by Web 2.0 (and beyond) culture.

The reading and writing skills you develop during your college years will also help you in your future profession. Think of a lawyer reviewing legal history or preparing a brief, a nurse reviewing current literature on medical innovations or writing a detailed progress report on a patient's recovery, or an environmental researcher reading and writing about issues regarding pollution and global warming. All these activities require the ability to think, read, and write about complex material. Learning the tools of critical reading and writing not only teaches you the "what" of an issue but also helps you think about and respond intelligently to the relative strength of the writer's opinions, ideas, and theories. Critical thinking, reading, and writing enable you to distinguish between informed ideas and pure speculation, rational arguments and emotional ones, and organized essays and structurally deficient ones.

As you hone your critical thinking, reading, and writing skills by tackling the essays in this anthology, you should soon understand how the written word is still the primary medium with which thinkers transmit the intricacies of controversial issues involving the family, society, politics, work, gender, and class. You will encounter complex and varied texts—both in print and online, in formats you can read, see, hear, and even interact with—that require you to extract maximum meaning from them, compare your views with those of the authors you read, and respond to what you read in an informed and coherent manner. The reading selections in this textbook have been chosen specifically to assist you in developing such skills. As you tackle these texts, you will realize that sound reading habits permit you to understand the fine points of logic, reasoning, analysis, argumentation, and evaluation.

READING CRITICALLY AND ACTIVELY

You can find numerous reasons to rationalize a failure to read carefully and critically. You have a headache. You're hungry. The material is boring. The writer puts you to sleep. Your roommates are talking. You have a date. In short, there are many internal and external barriers to critical reading. Fortunately, there are techniques—in a critical reading process—to guide you through this maze of distractions. Consider these five essential strategies:

1. *Develop an attitude of "critical consciousness."* In other words, do not be passive, uncritical, or alienated from the writer or the text. Instead, be active, critical, and engaged with the writer and his or her text.
2. *Read attentively.* Give your full attention to the text in order to understand it. Do not let your mind wander.
3. *Paraphrase.* Periodically restate what you read. Learn to process bits of key information. Keep a running inventory of highlights. Take mental or actual notes on the text's main points. (More information on paraphrasing and summarizing appears in this chapter and in Chapter 4.)
4. *Ask questions.* If for any reason you are uncertain about any aspect of the text, pose a question about it and try to answer it yourself. You might seek help from a friend

or classmate. If you still are unable to answer your question, ask for clarification from the instructor.

5. *Control your biases.* You must both control and correct any prejudices that might interfere with the claim, information, or tone of a text. You might, for example, have misgivings about a liberal or conservative writer, or about a feminist or a creationist, but such strong emotions can erode your ability to keep an open mind and your power to think critically about a subject or issue.

These five strategies will help you begin to overcome the barriers to critical reading.

One way to view critical reading is through the concept of active reading. Active reading suggests that you, as a reader, have an obligation to yourself and the author to bring an alert, critical, and responsive perspective to your encounter with the written word. Active reading means learning to annotate (a strategy discussed later in this chapter), to reflect on what you read, and to develop personal responses in order to prepare yourself for writing assignments that your instructor will present to you during the term. This process—reading critically in order to write critically—is not merely an academic exercise. It is a skill that can enrich you as a person throughout your life and career. It will teach you to respond critically to the admonitions of politicians or to the seductions of advertisements and, if you choose, to participate intelligently in the national conversation, which can lead to a rewarding life and responsible citizenship.

When you read an essay or any other type of text, you create meaning out of the material the author has presented. If the essay is relatively simple, clear, and concise, the meaning that you construct from your reading may be very similar to what the author intended. Nevertheless, the way you interact with even the most comprehensible texts will never be identical to the way another reader interacts.

As your class reads and discusses essays in this book, a majority of you will probably arrive at a broad consensus on the intention, meaning, and methods of each author. However, individual responses to a text will undoubtedly vary within an acceptable range of interpretation. When analyzing and evaluating an essay, several responses might all be appropriate, especially when dealing with a complicated or argumentative text. In other words, your interpretation of an essay will be conditioned by unique personal experience and background; race and ethnicity; age and gender; religious and political attitudes; biases and beliefs, and more. This is not to say that you can engage in farfetched or idiosyncratic responses. But even as your class attempts to construct a common reading for an essay, you have some latitude to craft your own meaning based on an informed and carefully considered response to the text.

RESPONDING TO ESSAYS

Between its print and online components, this textbook contains essays covering a variety of subjects by writers from a wealth of backgrounds and historical periods. You may be familiar with some, unfamiliar with others. All, however, have something to say and a way of saying it that others have found significant. Hence, many have stood the test of time, whether a year, a decade, or centuries. Essays are a recognized genre, or form of literature, and the finest essays have staying power. As Ezra Pound said, “Literature is news that stays news,” and the best examples of the essay convey this sense of permanent value.

Therefore, you have an obligation to be an active and critical reader to do justice to the work that was put into these texts. Most were written with care, over extended periods of time, and by people who themselves studied the art of writing and the topics of their discourse. During your first week of class, you may wish to read some of their brief biographies to understand these authors' personal and educational backgrounds, their beliefs and credos, and some of the significant moments of their lives. You will often find that there are logical connections between the stories of their lives and the topics they have written about.

Sharpening your reading skills will be important because you may not be able to personally choose the essays from the text. You may find some topics and essays more interesting than others. But if you are prepared to read critically, you will be able to bring the same set of skills to any selection your instructor assigns. With this principle in mind, we present an overview of the active reading process and an example of using this process on pages 16–18 with an annotated essay titled "The Cult of Ethnicity," by Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr.

When you are given a reading assignment from the textbook, a good strategy in preparing to read is to locate the text as well as possible within its broader context. Read the biographical notes about the author. Focus on the title of the essay. What can you infer from the title? How long is the essay? Although many students delight at the thought of reading shorter texts rather than longer ones, you may find that this variable is not always the deciding one in determining how easily you "get through" the essay. Short essays can be intricate and difficult; long ones can be simpler and more transparent. A long essay on a topic in which you are interested may be more rewarding than a short essay that you find lacking in relevance.

Other basic prereading activities include noting whether there are section breaks in the essay, whether there are subheadings, whether the author has used footnotes, and if so, how extensive they are. Other preliminary questions to answer could be, What is the date of the original publication of the essay? In what medium was it originally published? Is the essay a fully contained work, or is it an excerpt from a larger text? Are there visual or mathematical aids, such as graphs, charts, diagrams, or lists? Because authors often use typographical signals to highlight things or to help organize what they have written, you might ask, Does the author use quotation marks to signal certain words? Is italic type used, and if so, what is its purpose? Are other books and authors cited in the essay? Does the author use organizational tools such as Arabic or Roman numerals? Once you have answered these questions regarding mechanics, you will be prepared to deal more substantively with the essay as a unit of meaning and communication.

Preparing to read also means understanding that you bring your own knowledge, opinions, experiences, and attitudes to the text. You are not an empty glass to be filled with the knowledge and opinions of the authors, but rather a learner who can bring to bear your own reflections on what you read even if you think your knowledge is minimal. Often we do not know just how much ability we have in thinking about a topic until we actively respond to what others confront us with in their writings. By tackling the reading assignments in the text, you will not only learn new information and confront opinions that may challenge your own but also find that reading frees up your ability to express your opinions. For this reason, most English teachers look on reading as a two-way process: an exchange between writer and reader.

Although the credentials and experience of a professional writer may seem impressive, they should not deter you from considering your own critical talents as you read. But first, you must find a way to harness those abilities.

Following is a summary for reading and responding to texts critically.

GUIDELINES FOR READING CRITICALLY

- Who is the author? What do you know about his or her life, credentials, and professional background? (*Headnotes*, or author introductions that appear at the start of the essays in this book, provide some of this information.) If there is more than one author (and 21st-century texts increasingly reflect collaborative writing processes), what is the personal or professional relationship between these writers?
- Where did the selection first appear? What do you know about this publication? Is the text an entire selection, an excerpt, or part of a chapter?
- Did the selection appear in print, online, or both? Is there something specific about its content that this format (or that multiple formats) enhances or works well with? If it is online, how interactive is the selection? What role does the reader play in its purpose and content?
- Who is the author’s audience? Is this audience general, specific, or targeted even more narrowly for a highly specialized group? What assumptions does the author make about this audience’s education and background and its potential interest in the subject? How does the author adjust the elements of *style*—language, sentence structure, and complexity of thought—to this audience?
- What is significant about the title? Does the title present the author’s general subject in a straightforward way, hint at the topic, or create a sense of mystery, irony, or humor?
- What is the author’s purpose? Normally authors write to inform, argue, persuade, entertain, express a personal idea or opinion—or a combination of these objectives. Does the author’s purpose complement or seem right for the topic?
- What is the author’s main point? Does the author state the main point (termed a *thesis* or *claim*) clearly and concisely in the introduction, place it elsewhere in the text, permit it to evolve slowly, or require you to infer it after reading the entire essay?
- What are the main subpoints? How do these subordinate points inform or support the main point? Are there enough subpoints? Is there sufficient information or evidence to support the main point?
- How does the author organize the essay? What constitutes the introductory section, the body or middle of the essay, and conclusion? Are there subdivisions or numbered units, and how are they linked logically? Are there any missing links?
- How does your personal experience affect your response to the author’s ideas? Do you detect any authorial biases (or your own potential biases) that influence your response?

Thinking Critically

The following essay, "From Ancient Greece to Iraq, the Power of Words in Wartime," by Robin Tolmach Lakoff, appeared in the *New York Times* on May 18, 2004. Read the essay and respond in writing to each of the questions in the Guidelines for Reading Critically box on the previous page.



From Ancient Greece to Iraq, the Power of Words in Wartime

Robin Tolmach Lakoff

Robin Tolmach Lakoff is a linguistics professor at the University of California at Berkeley and the author of The Language War.

An American soldier refers to an Iraqi prisoner as "it." A general speaks not of 1 "Iraqi fighters" but of "the enemy." A weapons manufacturer doesn't talk about people but about "targets."

Bullets and bombs are not the only tools of war. Words, too, play their part. 2

Human beings are social animals, genetically hard-wired to feel compassion toward others. Under normal conditions, most people find it very difficult to kill. 3

But in war, military recruits must be persuaded that killing other people is 4 not only acceptable but even honorable.

The language of war is intended to bring about that change, and not only for 5 soldiers in the field. In wartime, language must be created to enable combatants and noncombatants alike to see the other side as killable, to overcome the innate queasiness over the taking of human life. Soldiers, and those who remain at home, learn to call their enemies by names that make them seem not quite human—inferior, contemptible and not like "us."

The specific words change from culture to culture and war to war. The 6 names need not be obviously demeaning. Just the fact that we can name them gives us a sense of superiority and control. If, in addition, we give them nicknames, we can see them as smaller, weaker and childlike—not worth taking seriously as fully human.

Robin Tolmach Lakoff, "From Ancient Greece to Iraq, the Power of Words in Wartime." From *The New York Times*, May 18, 2004. © 2004 The New York Times. All rights reserved. Used by permission and protected by the Copyright Laws of the United States. The printing, copying, redistribution, or retransmission of the Material without express written permission is prohibited.

- 7 The Greeks and Romans referred to everyone else as “barbarians”—etymologically those who only babble, only go “bar-bar.” During the American Revolution, the British called the colonists “Yankees,” a term with a history that is still in dispute. While the British intended it disparagingly, the Americans, in perhaps the first historical instance of reclamation, made the word their own and gave it a positive spin, turning the derisive song “Yankee Doodle” into our first, if unofficial, national anthem.
- 8 In World War I, the British gave the Germans the nickname “Jerries,” from the first syllable of German. In World War II, Americans referred to the Japanese as “Japs.”
- 9 The names may refer to real or imagined cultural and physical differences that emphasize the ridiculous or the repugnant. So in various wars, the British called the French “Frogs.” Germans have been called “Krauts,” a reference to weird and smelly food. The Vietnamese were called “slopes” and “slants.” The Koreans were referred to simply as “gooks.”
- 10 The war in Iraq has added new examples. Some American soldiers refer to the Iraqis as “hadjis,” used in a derogatory way, apparently unaware that the word, which comes from the Arabic term for a pilgrimage to Mecca, is used as a term of respect for older Muslim men.
- 11 The Austrian ethnologist Konrad Lorenz suggested that the more clearly we see other members of our own species as individuals, the harder we find it to kill them.
- 12 So some terms of war are collective nouns, encouraging us to see the enemy as an undifferentiated mass, rather than as individuals capable of suffering. Crusaders called their enemy “the Saracen,” and in World War I, the British called Germans “the Hun.”
- 13 American soldiers are trained to call those they are fighting against “the enemy.” It is easier to kill an enemy than an Iraqi.
- 14 The word “enemy” itself provides the facelessness of a collective noun. Its non-specificity also has a fear-inducing connotation; enemy means simply “those we are fighting,” without reference to their identity.
- 15 The terrors and uncertainties of war make learning this kind of language especially compelling for soldiers on the front. But civilians back home also need to believe that what their country is doing is just and necessary, and that the killing they are supporting is in some way different from the killing in civilian life that is rightly punished by the criminal justice system. The use of the language developed for military purposes by civilians reassures them that war is not murder.
- 16 The linguistic habits that soldiers must absorb in order to fight make atrocities like those at Abu Ghraib virtually inevitable. The same language that creates a psychological chasm between “us” and “them” and enables American troops to kill in battle, makes enemy soldiers fit subjects for torture and humiliation. The reasoning is: They are not really human, so they will not feel the pain.
- 17 Once language draws that line, all kinds of mistreatment become imaginable, and then justifiable. To make the abuses at Abu Ghraib unthinkable, we would have to abolish war itself.

NETWORKING*Applying 21st-Century Literacies*

Engaging with Digital, Hyperlinked Texts: On the Chapter 1 Networking page at www.mhhe.com/mhreaderbrief1e, click on the link to read the article “Judging Honesty by Words, Not Fidgets” in the *New York Times*. First, respond in writing to the questions in the Guidelines for Reading Critically box on page 6. Then reread the article, connecting to the hyperlinks within the *Times* and outside it. Also consider the image attached to the article, the two podcasts, the interview with Carey on WNYC, suggestions for related searches, and links to past coverage of the topic. Take notes on your findings, and share your research in class discussion and/or a class online forum or blog.

ENGAGING IN CRITICAL READING

It should be evident to you by now that you are not a mere recipient of information who passively accepts what the writer conveys. Instead, you should feel comfortable about engaging the author as you might a friend in a lively conversation or argument. And just as a talk with a friend involves active listening, rebuttal, and the use of facts and logic, the interaction between yourself and the author needs to be a dynamic one as well.

Active reading is so important in the learning process that a well-known American philosopher and public intellectual, Mortimer Adler, wrote an essay that has become a classic on this topic: “How to Mark a Book.”

As with most of the essays included in this text, this one contains a headnote providing information about the author and is followed by questions for response and writing.



How to Mark a Book

Mortimer J. Adler

Mortimer Jerome Adler (1902–2001) was born in New York City and received his PhD from Columbia University in 1928. A staunch advocate for classical philosophy, Adler believed that there are unshakable truths—an idea rejected by most contemporary philosophers. For this reason, Adler has not been taken seriously by the academic establishment. He was a champion of knowledge, believing that philosophy should be a part of everyone’s life and that the great ideas in philosophy can be of value to everyone. Many of his over 75 books attempt to edify the general reader by explaining basic philosophical concepts in everyday language. He was also chairman of the editorial board of the Encyclopaedia Britannica. To make knowledge more accessible to everyone, he also assumed editorship of the Encyclopaedia Britannica’s Great Books project, partly sponsored by the University of Chicago. This project, which has put 443 of the world’s

"classics" into a 54-volume set, graces the bookcases of many dens and studies in American homes. Despite his advancing years, Adler continued to work on many projects to promote his goal of universal education and enlightenment. "How to Mark a Book" is typical of his didactic, pragmatic approach to education.

- 1 You know you have to read "between the lines" to get the most out of anything. I want to persuade you to do something equally important in the course of your reading. I want to persuade you to "write between the lines." Unless you do, you are not likely to do the most efficient kind of reading.
- 2 I contend, quite bluntly, that marking up a book is not an act of mutilation but of love.
- 3 You shouldn't mark up a book which isn't yours. Librarians (or your friends) who lend you books expect you to keep them clean, and you should. If you decide that I am right about the usefulness of marking books, you will have to buy them. Most of the world's great books are available today, in reprint editions, at less than a dollar.
- 4 There are two ways in which one can own a book. The first is the property right you establish by paying for it, just as you pay for clothes and furniture. But this act of purchase is only the prelude to possession. Full ownership comes only when you have made it a part of yourself, and the best way to make yourself a part of it is by writing in it. An illustration may make the point clear. You buy a beefsteak and transfer it from the butcher's ice-box to your own. But you do not own the beefsteak in the most important sense until you consume it and get it into your bloodstream. I am arguing that books, too, must be absorbed in your bloodstream to do you any good.
- 5 Confusion about what it means to own a book leads people to a false reverence for paper, binding, and type—a respect for the physical thing—the craft of the printer rather than the genius of the author. They forget that it is possible for a man to acquire the idea, to possess the beauty, which a great book contains, without staking his claim by pasting his bookplate inside the cover. Having a fine library doesn't prove that its owner has a mind enriched by books; it proves nothing more than that he, his father, or his wife, was rich enough to buy them.
- 6 There are three kinds of book owners. The first has all the standard sets and best-sellers—unread, untouched. (This deluded individual owns woodpulp and ink, not books.) The second has a great many books—a few of them read through, most of them dipped into, but all of them as clean and shiny as the day they were bought. (This person would probably like to make books his own, but is restrained by a false respect for their physical appearance.) The third has a few books or many—every one of them dog-eared and dilapidated, shaken and loosened by continual use, marked and scribbled in front to back. (This man owns books.)
- 7 Is it false respect, you may ask, to preserve intact and unblemished a beautifully printed book, an elegantly bound edition? Of course not. I'd no more scribble all over the first edition of *Paradise Lost* than I'd give my baby a set of crayons and an original Rembrandt! I wouldn't mark up a painting or a statue. Its soul, so to speak, is inseparable from its body. And the beauty of a rare edition or of a richly manufactured volume is like that of a painting or a statue.

But the soul of a book *can* be separated from its body. A book is more like the score of a piece of music than it is like a painting. No great musician confuses a symphony with the printed sheets of music. Arturo Toscanini reveres Brahms, but Toscanini's score of the C-minor Symphony is so thoroughly marked up that no one but the maestro himself can read it. The reason why a great conductor makes notations on his musical scores—marks them up again and again each time he returns to study them—is the reason why you should mark up your books. If your respect for magnificent binding or typography gets in the way, buy yourself a cheap edition and pay your respects to the author.

Why is marking up a book indispensable to reading it? First, it keeps you awake. (And I don't mean merely conscious; I mean wide awake.) In the second place, reading, if it is active, is thinking, and thinking tends to express itself in words, spoken or written. The marked book is usually the thought-through book. Finally, writing helps you remember the thoughts you had, or the thoughts the author expressed. Let me develop these three points.

If reading is to accomplish anything more than passing time, it must be active. You can't let your eyes glide across the lines of a book and come up with an understanding of what you have read. Now an ordinary piece of light fiction, like say, *Gone with the Wind*, doesn't require the most active kind of reading. The books you read for pleasure can be read in a state of relaxation, and nothing is lost. But a great book, rich in ideas and beauty, a book that raises and tries to answer great fundamental questions, demands the most active reading of which you are capable. You don't absorb the ideas of John Dewey the way you absorb the crooning of Mr. Vallee. You have to reach for them. That you cannot do while you're asleep.

If, when you've finished reading a book, the pages are filled with your notes, you know that you read actively. The most famous *active* reader of great books I know is President Hutchins, of the University of Chicago. He also has the hardest schedule of business activities of any man I know. He invariably reads with a pencil, and sometimes, when he picks up a book and pencil in the evening, he finds himself, instead of making intelligent notes, drawing what he calls "caviar factories" on the margins. When that happens, he puts the book down. He knows he's too tired to read, and he's just wasting time.

But, you may ask, why is writing necessary? Well, the physical act of writing, with your own hand, brings words and sentences more sharply before your mind and preserves them better in your memory. To set down your reaction to important words and sentences you have read, and the questions they have raised in your mind, is to preserve those reactions and sharpen those questions.

Even if you wrote on a scratch pad, and threw the paper away when you had finished writing, your grasp of the book would be surer. But you don't have to throw the paper away. The margins (top and bottom, as well as side), the end-papers, the very space between the lines, are all available. They aren't sacred. And, best of all, your marks and notes become an integral part of the book and stay there forever. You can pick up the book the following week or year, and there are all your points of agreement, disagreement, doubt, and

inquiry. It's like resuming an interrupted conversation with the advantage of being able to pick up where you left off.

- 14 And that is exactly what reading a book should be: a conversation between you and the author. Presumably he knows more about the subject than you do; naturally, you'll have the proper humility as you approach him. But don't let anybody tell you that a reader is supposed to be solely on the receiving end. Understanding is a two-way operation; learning doesn't consist in being an empty receptacle. The learner has to question himself and question the teacher. He even has to argue with the teacher, once he understands what the teacher is saying. And marking a book is literally an expression of your differences, or agreements of opinion, with the author.

- 15 There are all kinds of devices for marking a book intelligently and fruitfully. Here's the way I do it:

1. Underlining: Of major points, of important or forceful statements.
2. Vertical lines at the margin: To emphasize a statement already underlined.
3. Star, asterisk, or other doo-dad at the margin: To be used sparingly, to emphasize the ten or twenty most important statements in the book. (You may want to fold the bottom corner of each page on which you use such marks. It won't hurt the sturdy paper on which most modern books are printed, and you will be able to take the book off the shelf at any time and, by opening it at the folded-corner page, refresh your recollection of the book.)
4. Numbers in the margin: To indicate the sequence of points the author makes in developing a single argument.
5. Numbers of other pages in the margin: To indicate where else in the book the author made points relevant to the point marked; to tie up the ideas in a book, which, though they may be separated by many pages, belong together.
6. Circling of key words or phrases.
7. Writing in the margin, or at the top or bottom of the page, for the sake of: Recording questions (and perhaps answers) which a passage raised in your mind; reducing a complicated discussion to a simple statement; recording the sequence of major points right through the book. I use the end-papers at the back of the book to make a personal index of the author's points in the order of their appearance.

- 16 The front end-papers are, to me, the most important. Some people reserve them for a fancy bookplate. I reserve them for fancy thinking. After I have finished reading the book and making my personal index on the back end-papers, I turn to the front and try to outline the book, not page by page, or point by point (I've already done that at the back), but as an integrated structure, with a basic unity and an order of parts. This outline is, to me, the measure of my understanding of the work.

- 17 If you're a die-hard and anti-book-marker, you may object that the margins, the space between the lines, and the end-papers don't give you room enough. All right. How about using a scratch pad slightly smaller than the page-size of

the book—so that the edges of the sheets won’t protrude? Make your index, outlines, and even your notes on the pad, and then insert these sheets permanently inside the front and back covers of the book.

Or, you may say that this business of marking books is going to slow up your ¹⁸ reading. It probably will. That’s one of the reasons for doing it. Most of us have been taken in by the notion that speed of reading is a measure of our intelligence. There is no such thing as the right speed for intelligent reading. Some things should be read quickly and effortlessly, and some should be read slowly and even laboriously. The sign of intelligence in reading is the ability to read different things differently according to their worth. In the case of good books, the point is not to see how many of them you can get through, but rather how many can get through you—how many you can make your own. A few friends are better than a thousand acquaintances. If this be your aim, as it should be, you will not be impatient if it takes more time and effort to read a great book than it does a newspaper.

You may have one final objection to marking books. You can’t lend them to ¹⁹ your friends because nobody else can read them without being distracted by your notes. Furthermore, you won’t want to lend them because a marked copy is a kind of intellectual diary, and lending it is almost like giving your mind away.

If your friend wishes to read your *Plutarch’s Lives*, “Shakespeare,” or *The Federalist Papers*, tell him gently but firmly, to buy a copy. You will lend him your car or ²⁰ your coat—but your books are as much a part of you as your head or your heart.

COMPREHENSION

1. Summarize what Adler means by “marking up a book.”
2. In your own words, explain how you believe Adler would define the word *book*.
3. Adler mentions books throughout the essay. What particular type of book is he referring to?

RHETORIC

1. What is the tone of the essay? What can you infer from this tone about Adler’s emotional relationship to books?
2. Paragraph 15 lists devices for marking a book. What is the function of enumerating them in this way? How would the tone of this section have been altered if Adler had summarized these devices in paragraph form?
3. The author makes reference to various intellectual and artistic figures and works in the essay. How does this help determine for whom the essay has been targeted?
4. Study the relationship between paragraph 9 and paragraphs 10–12. What is the rhetorical format of this section? What method of argumentation is Adler employing?
5. Adler uses the analogy that “reading a book should be: a conversation between you and the author.” What other analogies can you find in the essay?
6. Adler raises objections to his argument and then refutes the objections. Where does he make use of this rhetorical device? How effective is it in advancing his argument?
7. Adler calls *Gone with the Wind* “light fiction.” Is this opinion or fact? Is it a mere observation or a criticism of the book?

WRITING

1. Mark up Adler's essay in the same manner he recommends that you mark up any good piece of writing. Then write an essay using process analysis to summarize the various methods you used.
2. Compare and contrast two books: one that Adler would regard as "light reading" and one that he would regard as worthy of marking up. Indicate the primary differences between these books in terms of their diction, level of discourse, insight, purpose, and scholarship.
3. **Writing an Argument:** Argue for or against the proposition that this essay has lost its relevance owing to the introduction of new forms of educational media.



NETWORKING

Applying 21st-Century Literacies

Marking a Text Electronically: From Chapter 1's Networking page (at www.mhhe.com/mhreaderbrief1e), choose an online article or essay. Cut and paste the text into a new document. Then locate "Track Changes" (or a similar editing feature) in your word-processing program, and experiment with using this software to mark the article electronically. As an alternative, use a program like WebNotes (www.webnotes.net) or Fleck (www.fleck.com) to mark up the online article on the Web itself. For you as a reader, determine whether Track Changes or a program like Fleck is as useful as the more traditional reading practices advocated by Adler. Why or why not? Which method of marking a text appeals more to you, and why? There is no single correct answer to this, but be sure that your response is backed up by specific, detailed reasons.

Even if some technologically advanced tools can enhance the critical reading process, Adler's essay, which focuses on traditional ways to interact with texts, reveals that you don't need anything high-tech to respond to them. Among the essential elements of close reading that have widespread appeal and application are annotating, note taking, and questioning the text.

Annotating

Annotating refers to marking your text (by hand or online) by making content notes, by using symbols such as question marks and exclamation points, and by recording personal reactions. Annotating is not mere underlining or highlighting. These latter two methods often serve little purpose in helping you comprehend a text. Most likely, when you return to passages you've marked with these simple procedures, you will have forgotten why you felt they were important. If you do underline or highlight, be sure to link your marking with a note in the margin. Simply drawing attention to someone else's words does little in the way of expanding your own thoughts on a topic. Learning is best accomplished by restating ideas in your own words.

Taking Notes

Many essays in your anthology will require more than simply jotting down marginal notes in order to comprehend them fully or to respond to them in depth. Just as you might take notes during a classroom lecture, you may find it useful to take notes to supplement your annotations. You may wish, for example, to type quotations so that you can see them together. Or you may wish to summarize the essay by outlining its key points, a reversal of the process you would use to develop your own essay, wherein you begin with an outline and expand it into paragraphs. By collapsing an essay into an outline, you have a handy reference of the author's thesis (main idea) and supporting points, and the methods used to develop them. Another function of note taking is to overcome the simple habit most of us have of thinking we will remember things without jotting them down or typing them, only to find out later that we cannot recall significant information from memory. You will appreciate the benefits of taking notes when you tackle lengthy essays, which may run 15 or 20 pages.

Questioning the Text

Posing key questions about a text and then answering them to the best of your ability is a helpful means of understanding an essay's substance and structure. Certain basic questions, like the ones below, are salient for nearly any text you confront, and answering them for yourself can be a powerful means of enhancing your comprehension. As you read the text, such questions help you spot the significant issues that lie within most essays, regardless of their form or length. It is a good habit to have these questions in mind as you read and then to return to them once you've thought through your responses. They serve as guideposts along the way of your reading experience and assist you in focusing on those issues that are most important to a text. When you become comfortable with them, you will probably find that your mind automatically poses them as you read, making your comprehension of difficult texts easier.

- What is the thesis or main point of the text?
- What methods does the author use to support these points, for instance, illustration, example, description, personal experience, or history? Does he or she cite authorities or studies or statistics?
- What value position, if any, does the author present? In other words, is the author either directly or indirectly presenting her or his moral framework on an issue, or is she or he summarizing or describing an issue?
- Does the author use any special terms or expressions that need to be elucidated to understand the essay? You will find that authors, when addressing innovative or revolutionary ideas within the context of their times, must use vocabulary that often needs to be defined. Take, for example, the term *multiculturalism*. Exactly what might an author mean by that word?
- What is the level of discourse of the essay? Or what is the audience's level of educational attainment the author presumes?
- Who is the implied audience for the essay? Is it written for a specialized profession (such as scientists or educators)? Is it written for individuals with a focus on their particular role in society, for example, as parents or consumers or citizens?

An Example The following essay, “The Cult of Ethnicity,” by the influential historian Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., has been annotated to demonstrate how a student might respond to it. Schlesinger’s essay also will be used to explain aspects of the reading and writing process as we move through this section.

This seems like the thesis. Where are his supports? Or is it the thesis?

Look these up.
Demonstrates knowledge on the part of the author.

Historical figure—
who was he?

Is this a partly American phenomenon?
*prevents racial and ethnic conflict

Why?-doesn't explain

The history of the world has been in great part the history of the mixing of peoples. Modern communication and transport accelerate mass migrations from one continent to another. Ethnic and racial diversity are more than ever a salient fact of the age.

But what happens when people of different origins, speaking different languages and professing different religions, inhabit the same locality and live under the same political sovereignty? Ethnic and racial conflict—far more than ideological conflict—is the explosive problem of our times.

On every side today ethnicity is breaking up nations. The Soviet Union, India, Yugoslavia, Ethiopia, are all in crisis. Ethnic tensions disturb and divide Sri Lanka, Burma, Indonesia, Iraq, Cyprus, Nigeria, Angola, Lebanon, Guyana, Trinidad—you name it. Even nations as stable and civilized as Britain and France, Belgium and Spain, face growing ethnic troubles. Is there any large multi-ethnic state that can be made to work?

The answer to that question has been, until recently, the United States. “No other nation,” Margaret Thatcher has said, “has so successfully combined people of different races and nations within a single culture.” How have Americans succeeded in pulling off this almost unprecedented trick?

We have always been a multiethnic country. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, who came from France in the 18th century, marveled at the astonishing diversity of the settlers—“a mixture of English, Scotch, Irish, French, Dutch, Germans and Swedes . . . this promiscuous breed.” He propounded a famous question: “What then is the American, this new man?” And he gave a famous answer: “Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men.” *E pluribus unum.*

The United States escaped the divisiveness of a multiethnic society by a brilliant solution: the creation of a brand-new national identity. The point of America was not to preserve old cultures but to forge a new, American culture. “By an intermixture with our people,” President George Washington told Vice President John Adams, immigrants will “get assimilated to our customs, measures and laws: in a word, soon become one people.” This was the ideal that a century later Israel Zangwill crystallized in the title of his popular 1908 play *The Melting Pot*. And no institution was more potent in molding Crevecoeur’s “promiscuous breed” into Washington’s “one people” than the American public school.

The new American nationality was inescapably English in language, ideas, and institutions. The pot did not melt everybody,

not even all the white immigrants; deeply bred racism put black Americans, yellow Americans, red Americans and brown Americans well outside the pale. Still, the infusion of other stocks, even of nonwhite stocks, and the experience of the New World reconfigured the British legacy and made the United States, as we all know, a very different country from Britain.

In the 20th century, new immigration laws altered the composition of the American people, and a cult of ethnicity erupted both among non-Anglo whites and among nonwhite minorities. This had many healthy consequences. The American culture at last began to give shamefully overdue recognition to the achievements of groups subordinated and spurned during the high noon of Anglo dominance, and it began to acknowledge the great swirling world beyond Europe. Americans acquired a more complex and invigorating sense of their world—and of themselves.

But, pressed too far, the cult of ethnicity has unhealthy consequences. It gives rise, for example, to the conception of the United States as a nation composed not of individuals making their own choices but of inviolable ethnic and racial groups. It rejects the historic American goals of assimilation and integration.

And, in an excess of zeal, well-intentioned people seek to transform our system of education from a means of creating “one people” into a means of promoting, celebrating and perpetuating separate ethnic origins and identities. The balance is shifting from *unum* to *pluribus*.

That is the issue that lies behind the hullabaloo over “multiculturalism” and “political correctness,” the attack on the “Eurocentric” curriculum and the rise of the notion that history and literature should be taught not as disciplines but as therapies whose function is to raise minority self-esteem. Group separatism crystallizes the differences, magnifies tensions, intensifies hostilities. Europe—the unique source of the liberating ideas of democracy, civil liberties and human rights—is portrayed as the root of all evil, and non-European cultures, their own many crimes deleted, are presented as the means of redemption.

I don’t want to sound apocalyptic about these developments. Education is always in ferment, and a good thing too. The situation in our universities, I am confident, will soon right itself. But the impact of separatist pressures on our public schools is more troubling. If a Kleagle of the Ku Klux Klan wanted to use the schools to disable and handicap black Americans, he would hardly come up with anything more effective than the “Afrocentric” curriculum. And if separatist tendencies go unchecked, the result can only be the fragmentation, resegregation and tribalization of American life.

I remain optimistic. My impression is that the historic forces driving toward “one people” have not lost their power. The eruption of ethnicity is, I believe, a rather superficial enthusiasm

Note S's use of historical process analysis

vocab.: infusion stocks

zeal

Eurocentric apocalyptic ferment

Kleagle crucible

Signals a warning—danger

Is this thesis or related to thesis?

Support against multiculturalism

General—where are the specific examples?

Is this an exaggeration? How does he know?

Who are these people?
He doesn't mention
them specifically.

Reality is stronger
than "ideology"? Is
this his "solution"?

A sharp conclusion →
argument?
United States must
be example. This is the
thesis.

stirred by romantic ideologues on the one hand and by unscrupulous con men on the other: self-appointed spokesmen whose claim to represent their minority groups is carelessly accepted by the media. Most American-born members of minority groups, white or nonwhite, see themselves primarily as Americans rather than primarily as members of one or another ethnic group. A notable indicator today is the rate of intermarriage across ethnic lines, across religious lines, even (increasingly) across racial lines. "We Americans," said Theodore Roosevelt, "are children of the crucible."

The growing diversity of the American population makes the quest for unifying ideals and a common culture all the more urgent. In a world savagely rent by ethnic and racial antagonisms, the United States must continue as an example of how a highly differentiated society holds itself together.

What has this annotating accomplished? It has allowed the reader/annotator to consider and think about what she has read, integrate her ideas with the ideas of the author, challenge those she may disagree with, raise issues for further study, find the seeds of ideas that may become the focus of an essay in response to the writing, review what she has read with more facility, and quickly and efficiently return to those parts of the essay she found the most salient.

The aforementioned strategies will assist you in responding intelligently in the classroom, remembering the main points of what you have read, and internalizing the critical reading skill so that it becomes automatic. However, such activities are not as challenging as the ultimate goal of most of your reading assignments, which will be to respond in formal writing to the works you've read. For this, you will need to enhance your study skills a bit further so that they will prepare you to write.

Formal writing assignments require you to demonstrate that you understood what you have read and are able to respond in an informed and intelligent manner to the material. They also require you to use appropriate form, organization, and exposition. Above all, regardless of what you want to express, you will have to communicate your ideas clearly and concisely. To this end, you will need to acquire skills that you can call on when it comes to writing at length about what you have read. To do so, you will find your ability to paraphrase, summarize, and quote directly from the original material particularly helpful.

When you move to this next phase, however, try to avoid a common practice among readers that causes them to waste time and effort. Many students think they have completed a reading assignment when they read the last word of an essay. They utter a sigh of relief, look inside the refrigerator for something to eat, call up friends, or browse online. However, as a critical reader, you need to spend additional time reinforcing what you have read by thinking about the author's views, considering her or his rhetorical methods, and reviewing or adding to your notes and annotations. For example, one culminating activity at this point can be to either mentally or verbally summarize what you have read. You can summarize verbally by enlisting a classmate and simply stating in your own terms the main points of your reading assignment. This oral summarizing will prevent a common problem many readers experience: the natural tendency to forget most of what they read shortly after reading.

Message-Making: An Interactive Approach

An essayist attempts to communicate a message to his or her audience. This message is the *content*. But “message making” is a process—the exchange of information through a shared system of verbal or visual symbols. Your goal in reading critically is to understand not just the informational content of a text but also how the writer shares meaning and typically tries to influence your beliefs and behavior. A good writer, to paraphrase Plato in *Phaedrus*, tries to “enchant” your mind.

From Plato to the present—including the emergence of Web 2.0 as a pathway for collaborating, sharing information, and interacting with others—theorists have stressed this interactional aspect of reading and writing. Someone constructs a message (for our purposes, a written text) and transmits it, and we have to receive it, decode it, and respond to it. Thus any “piece” of writing, whether designed to inform, persuade, or entertain, is the product of a complex process of actions and interactions by which we perceive, order, and verify (or make sense of) what we read. Whether we have the capacity to grasp the argument of a text, think logically about a thesis, or understand the cultural background of a writer and how it informs a text depends on how well we *perceive* the ways in which the writer creates meaning in the text.

Defined simply, *perception* is the process by which you create meaning for your world. As a process, it deals with the way you interpret the behavior of others as well as yourself. Thus, understanding perception helps to explain how we process information about self, others, and our world. Our senses—seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling—provide us initial contact with the outside world, enabling us to establish our perceptual field of reference. However, we also perceive what we want to perceive, which we call *psychological selectivity*. There is a third form of perception known as *cultural selectivity*: from a cultural perspective, we are conditioned by our culture’s code of values and modes of understanding. For example, the phenomenon of *binocular rivalry* demonstrates that people from two different cultures exposed to two pictures at the same time will remember elements compatible with their own culture. With critical reading, you can have diverging interpretations of passages or an entire text because you perceive them from different perspectives.

In addition to differences in perception, you should be mindful of how an author presents information. This can be as important as the information itself. Strategies for writing may include the overall pattern of an essay—for example, is it an argument, an explanation, a definition, an evaluation, a comparison, or a contrast? While you may not think of essays in terms of genre, as you do literature (poetry, short fiction, drama), such forms can help you to understand the motivation behind the writer’s work and to seek out significant passages. For example, if the essay is argumentative, you should focus on the supporting points the author has provided, determining whether they offer adequate support for the author’s point of view. In an essay arguing for the return to traditional family values, for instance, the use of one anecdote to prove a point would probably not be enough to persuade most readers.

As you read an essay, you should also consider the author’s *purpose* for writing. An essay about a personal experience would probably contain physical description; at the same time, the author’s purpose would probably be to communicate an element in his or her life that can provide insight into personal development in general. Among the more common purposes are the following: to inform, to persuade, to disprove, to describe, to narrate, to demonstrate, to compare and contrast, to seek a solution to a problem, to explain a process, to classify, to define, to warn, and to summarize. While most essays contain a variety of purposes, one often will stand out among the others.

All of the traditional forms of read-write culture are being transformed by new multimedia practices. We now have to make meaning from multimedia texts that incorporate such new literacy forms and representations as Amazon's Kindle (and other e-reader devices), audio editions of publications that you can listen to on a phone or MP3 player, and streaming video of authors discussing or reading from their work. Digital technologies change the ways you perceive and respond to texts. Visual representations—as a forthcoming section in this chapter reveals—are particularly significant in enhancing content while changing perceptions of the written text. In summary, new media texts alter read-write culture, presenting new opportunities for composition but also demanding new paths of perception.

PARAPHRASING, SUMMARIZING, QUOTING, AND SYNTHESIZING

As you prepare to respond to the writing of others, you need to develop skills so that your own writing will reflect the hard work that went into the reading process. To this end, you can benefit from learning some shortcuts that will assist you in garnering information about what you have read. These skills include paraphrasing, summarizing, quoting directly from, and synthesizing another author's work.

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing means taking what you have read and putting it in your own words. Students occasionally complain about this process, using the argument that it is a waste of time to paraphrase when the author's own words are the best way to articulate his or her ideas. However, paraphrasing serves two main purposes. The more obvious one is that it prevents you from plagiarizing, even inadvertently, what you have read. In terms of learning, however, it is particularly helpful because it requires that you digest what you have read and then rewrite it. As you do so, you will develop writing patterns that over time will improve your ability to communicate. Paraphrasing forces you to truly think about what you have read and reinforces what you've read, since your mind has now been cognitively stimulated. You may find that paraphrasing often leads you to challenge the text or think more deeply about it simply because the paraphrasing process requires that you fully comprehend what you read.

It is important while paraphrasing to retain all the essential information of the original while not using any of the author's original vocabulary or style. One rule of thumb is to never use three or more words that appeared together in the original. However, you can keep words such as articles (*a, an, the*) and conjunctions (*and, for, but*, and so on).

The following are two examples of paraphrasing that demonstrate unsuccessful and successful application of the technique.

Original

But, pressed too far, the cult of ethnicity has unhealthy consequences. It gives rise, for example, to the conception of the United States as a nation composed not of individuals making their own choices but of inviolable ethnic and racial groups. It rejects the historic American goals of assimilation and integration.

Unsuccessful Parphrase

But, pressed too far, the focus on ethnicity has dangerous consequences. It suggests that the United States is a nation made up of separate ethnic and racial groups rather than individuals. It goes against the American ideals of integration and assimilation.

There are several things wrong with paraphrase 1. Rather than change key words, the writer has merely rearranged them. The sentence structure is very similar to that of the original, as is the ordering of ideas. If the student were to incorporate this paraphrase into her or his own essay, the teacher would probably consider it a form of plagiarism. It is simply too close to the original. To truly paraphrase, you must substitute vocabulary, rearrange sentence structure, and change the length and order of sentences. These strategies are more evident in paraphrase 2.

Successful Parphrase

Our country is made up of both individuals and groups. The recent trend to focus on the idea that one's ethnic background should have a major influence on one's perspective as a citizen goes against the moral foundations of the United States. It is the very concept of accepting American culture as one's own that has made our country strong and relatively free from cultural conflict.

Summarizing

A summary is a short, cohesive paragraph or paragraphs that are faithful to the structure and meaning of the original essay, but developed in your own words and including only the most essential elements of the original. Summaries are particularly helpful when you are planning to write lengthy assignments or assignments that require you to compare two or more sources. Because a good summary requires that you use many of the skills of active reading, it helps you to "imprint" the rhetorical features and content of what you have read in your memory, and also provides you with a means of communicating the essence of the essay to another person or group. To summarize successfully, you need to develop the ability to know what to leave out as much as what to include. As you review your source, the annotations and notes you made should help immensely. Since you want to deal with only the essentials of the original, you must delete all unimportant details and redundancies. Unlike paraphrasing, however, most summaries require that you stick to the general order of ideas as they are presented in a text. They also should not be mere retellings of what you have read, but should present the relationships among the ideas. It may be helpful to think of a summary as analogous to a news story, in which the essential details of what happened are presented in an orderly chronological fashion, because readers can best understand the gist of a story that way. It is simply the way the human mind—at least, the Western mind—operates. Another strategy in summarizing is to imagine that the audience you are summarizing for has not read the original. This places a strong responsibility on you to communicate the essentials of the text accurately.

The following six steps should help you in preparing a summary. After you've reviewed them, read the summary that follows and consider whether it seems to have fulfilled these suggestions.

1. Read the entire source at least twice and annotate it at least once before writing.
2. Write an opening sentence that states the author's thesis.

3. Explain the author's main supporting ideas, reviewing your notes to make sure you have included all of them. Be careful not to plagiarize, and use quotations only where appropriate.
4. Restate important concepts, key terms, main principles, and so on. Do not include your opinion or judge the essay in any way.
5. Present the ideas in the order in which they originally appeared. Note that in this sense summarizing is different from paraphrasing, in which staying too close to the original order of words may be detrimental to the process.
6. Review your summary once it has been completed. Consider whether someone who hasn't read the original would find your summary sufficient to understand the essence of the original work. You may also wish to have classmates or friends read the essay and furnish their verbal understanding of what you've written.

Now, review the following summary of Schlesinger's essay and determine whether it adheres to these points.

Sample Summary

Schlesinger argues that the recent surge of interest in ethnic separatism that is being touted by some whom he considers self-styled spokespersons for various ethnic groups threatens the unifying principle of our country's founders and undermines the strength of our society. This principle is that the American identity that was forged by its creators would be adopted by all peoples arriving here through a process of assimilation to our culture, values, and system of government so that cultural conflict could be avoided. Although he finds some merit in the idea that recognizing the contributions of certain groups who have been kept out of the national focus, for example, "nonwhite minorities," is a positive move, he fears that this can be taken to an extreme. The result could be the development of antagonism between ethnic groups solely on the basis of overemphasizing differences rather than recognizing similarities. He further argues that efforts to fragment American culture into subgroups can have the effect of jeopardizing their own empowerment, the opposite of the movement's intention. He gives the example of "Afrocentric" schooling, which he claims would only harm students enrolled in its curriculum. Despite this new interest in the "cult of ethnicity," the author is optimistic that it is of limited effect. He claims that most Americans still strive toward unity and identify themselves as Americans first, members of ethnic or racial groups second. He buttresses this belief by explaining that intermarriage is growing across racial, religious, and ethnic lines. This striving toward unity and identification with America among groups is particularly important today since their diversity is continuously increasing.

Quoting

Sayings and adages are extremely popular. You find them quoted in everyday speech, printed in calendars, rendered in calligraphy and framed and hung in homes, and spoken by public figures. These are, in effect, direct quotes, although the authors may be anonymous. Direct quotations often have a unique power because they capture the essence of an idea accurately and briefly. Another reason is that they are stylistically powerful. You may find in an essay a sentence or group of sentences that are worded so elegantly that you simply wish to savor them for yourself or plan to use them appropriately in a future writing assignment. Other times, you may wish to use direct quotations to demonstrate to a reader the effectiveness of an original essay or the authoritative voice of the author. And still other times, it may be necessary to quote an author because

her or his vocabulary simply cannot be changed without injuring the meaning of the original. Review the following quotations taken from the Schlesinger essay, and consider how paraphrasing them would diminish their rhetorical power.

Direct Quotations That Reflect the Conciseness of the Original

"The history of the world has been in great part the history of the mixing of peoples."

"On every side today ethnicity is breaking up nations."

"And if separatist tendencies go unchecked, the result can only be the fragmentation, resegregation and tribalization of American life."

Direct Quotations That Have Particular Stylistic Strength

"The pot did not melt everybody."

"The balance is shifting from *unum* to *pluribus*."

Direct Quotations That Establish the Writer's Authority

"The point of America was not to preserve old cultures but to forge a new, American culture. 'By an intermixture with our people,' President George Washington told Vice President John Adams, immigrants will 'get assimilated to our customs, measures and laws: in a word, soon become one people.'"

"A notable indicator today is the rate of intermarriage across ethnic lines, across religious lines, even (increasingly) across racial lines."

Direct Quotation That Demonstrates Conceptual Power

"The eruption of ethnicity, is, I believe, a rather superficial enthusiasm stirred by romantic ideologues on the one hand and by unscrupulous con men on the other."

Avoiding Plagiarism

When you employ summary, paraphrase, and quotation in an essay or a research paper, you must avoid *plagiarism*—the attempt to pass off the work of others as your own. The temptation to plagiarize is not only one of the oldest "crimes" in academe but also an unfortunate by-product of the computer revolution, for there are numerous opportunities for harried, enterprising, or—let's face it—dishonest students to download bits of information or entire texts and appropriate them without acknowledgment. At the same time, you should be aware that numerous Web sites and software programs allow your instructors to locate even the most inventive forms of plagiarism—right down to words and phrases—and that when writing research papers you may be required to attach all downloaded materials. Be warned: College teachers treat plagiarism as academic treason. If you plagiarize, you can fail a course, be suspended from college, and even be expelled.

We discuss plagiarism again in Chapter 4, which presents information on writing research papers. For now, you can avoid plagiarism by following these basic rules:

- Cite (provide a reference for) all quoted, summarized, or paraphrased information in your paper, unless that information is commonly understood. (For example, you would not have to cite the information that Barack Obama won the 2008 presidential election, because it is common knowledge.)
- Cite all special phrases or unique stylistic expressions that you derive from another writer's work. You might love a phrase by one of the famous writers in this book—say,

E. B. White or Alice Walker—but that writer invented it, and it belongs to him or her. You cannot employ it without acknowledging the source.

- Work hard to summarize and paraphrase material in your own words. Constantly check your language and sentence structure against the language and syntax in the source that you are using. If your words and sentences are too close to the original, change them.

Finally, it is perfectly legitimate to ask your instructor or a tutor in your college's writing center to look at your draft and render a verdict on any information you have summarized, paraphrased, or quoted. Whether this material has been taken intentionally or unintentionally from another source is immaterial. It is your responsibility to present honest written work.

Synthesizing: Drawing Connections from Texts

The ability to summarize, paraphrase, or quote from a single source prepares you for successful academic reading and writing. However, critical reading in college courses typically requires you to think about relationships between and among essays, newspaper articles, sections in textbooks, research findings, interviews, or other types of texts. If, for example, your instructor assigns a block of essays, you probably will need to infer relationships among these texts. We call this process of inferring relationships among various works *synthesis*: drawing connections from two or more written or non-written sources.

If you read online with any regularity, you are probably familiar with clicking on embedded hyperlinks or additional recommended links to materials related to the topic you are reading about. Such links encourage further synthesis by giving you access to other texts that help create a larger context for that topic. They might offer a similar, different, or now outdated perspective on a topic; definitions of certain terms; or more detailed coverage of particular organizations, people, places, theories, or anything else discussed.

You are probably already familiar with synthesis as an academic exercise. The act of reading two or more texts naturally prompts you to consider connections that link types of evidence, various ideas, or competing arguments. When you employ synthesis, you build strength in academic prose, skillfully condensing and connecting information, ideas, and arguments drawn from more than one text.

Any paper drawing on two or more sources requires you to construct relationships among materials that you quote, summarize, or paraphrase. (Remember that reading and writing are intimately connected, overlapping processes.) Suppose you paraphrase two complex passages from two texts. At the first level of critical response, you make the passages more intelligible. Then, at the next level, you convey the *essence* of the relationship between these two sources—whether it relates to the thesis or central argument, the accuracy of the data, or the structuring of materials.

In the process of synthesizing sources, you will often make judgments and arrive at conclusions about the validity of the information or arguments under consideration. In other words, you *critique* the texts—offering formalized, critical readings that express both your understanding of passages and your assessment of their content. With synthesis, what begins as an isolated moment (critically reading a single text) spirals into a series of moments (reading several texts), which demands your powers of comparative analysis and well-developed ability to evaluate relationships among sources.

The Art of Synthesis With synthesis, you enter into a conversation with two or more writers, attempting to understand their main ideas or arguments, analyze the evidence they provide, and evaluate their conclusions. As with any academic conversation, you must present the writers' ideas with accuracy and respect—but also with an eye to the purpose or aim of your writing. The noted writer and composition specialist Peter Elbow (see his essay in Chapter 2) calls this attempt to present fairly the ideas of other writers “the believing game.” In other words, you enter into the minds of other writers in order to appreciate their ideas and critical perspectives, but you do not suspend your beliefs or lose yourself entirely in the believing game. After all, you too have a specific purpose in writing: You merely want to exercise a degree of understanding and fairness as you synthesize the ideas of others.

It is relatively easy to consider two or more sources objectively when you use synthesis to explain the authors' ideas. (*Explanatory synthesis* is one of the two main types of synthesis. The other type, *argumentative synthesis*, will be treated briefly in this chapter and more fully in Chapter 3.) With explanatory synthesis, your purpose is to convey information using the tools of summary, paraphrase, and quotation to emphasize those aspects of certain texts that you find useful in constructing your essay. In a sense, you are detached and objective, an observer of information. Your purpose in using explanatory synthesis is to inform.

With argumentative synthesis, your conversation or dialogue with other writers shifts from objective explanation to the use of source material to bolster your *claim*—a major proposition or conclusion that other readers can agree or disagree with. You still might have to explain what others have said, but now you want to give a fair hearing to their arguments over a shared issue or topic while at the same time staking out your position on the matter. To support your argument, you seek *evidence* (facts and expert opinions) from relevant sources, analyze and evaluate the merits of that evidence, and use it to support your argument.

When you use argumentative synthesis, try to locate expert testimony, reliable sources, and verifiable types of evidence to reinforce your claim. Use this evidence so that it informs and strengthens your viewpoint. At the same time, you should acknowledge alternative viewpoints, for one feature of successful argument is the willingness to present and refute opposing claims. The challenge is to use any evidence that strengthens your text—but not at the risk of misrepresenting another writer's position or engaging in a biased or unfair presentation of the evidence.

Guidelines for Synthesis

1. *Consider your purpose.* Is your purpose to *explain* or to *argue*—or perhaps a combination of both? How will this purpose affect your search for sources?
2. *Select and identify your sources.* Where did the article first appear, and what might this publication tell you about the writer's perspective? Identify the author, noting his or her credentials, publications, and occupation. How does the title or subtitle reveal the writer's purpose? Does the title seem to conform to your purpose? Why or why not?
3. *Read critically and actively.* Follow the steps and procedures outlined on page 6. What is the writer's primary purpose? What is the main idea or argument? What are the minor points? How do the subpoints relate to the central point? What is the structure of the text—the introduction, middle sections, and conclusion? How does the text reinforce a key idea that you may have in mind for an essay?

4. *Take notes and summarize.* Use the techniques of print and/or electronic annotation illustrated on pages 14–18. Identify the writer’s main point and rewrite it in one or two sentences.
5. *Establish connections among readings.* What relationships do you detect as you move from text to text? How do major and minor points stressed by the writers in their texts overlap or diverge? What elements of their arguments are similar and dissimilar? (Draw up a list of similar and dissimilar points for handy reference.)
6. *Write your synthesis.* First, write down your *thesis* (main point) or *claim* (argument), and develop it in an introductory paragraph. Next, draft body or middle paragraphs that offer support for the thesis or claim; write topic sentences for all paragraphs; incorporate explanatory or argumentative details drawn from the sources that you synthesize; and document your sources properly in order to avoid any charge of plagiarism. Finally, write a conclusion that grows organically from the preceding paragraphs and reinforces your main idea. And, then, revise your essay. (Note: You can find information on the writing process, techniques of argumentation, and strategies for research in the pages and chapters that follow.)

READING AND RESPONDING TO ONLINE TEXTS

As a 21st-century reader and writer, you will be reviewing and experimenting frequently with texts that you locate online. Engaging with materials online, you should apply the same critical thinking and reading skills outlined in this chapter—along with a keen perception of the strengths and weaknesses of texts in the digital universe. For even as the Internet breaks new ground in the flow of (and access to) knowledge, the Web also contains a torrent of information—much of it unreliable. An ability to navigate these less charted waters, to interpret and judge online texts, will be crucial to your success in college and beyond.

Because online texts in all their variety—academic articles, government documents, wikis, blog postings, social networking sites, and more—constitute new models of composing, you need new ways to approach and manage them. Fortunately, college libraries across the nation are in the forefront of the attempt to harness the size, speed, and global interconnectedness of the Internet to benefit students.

According to the UCLA library staff, a good Web site does all of the following:

1. Clearly states the author and/or organizational **source** of the information;
2. Clearly states the **date** the material was written and the date the site was last revised;
3. Provides **accurate** data whose parameters are clearly defined;
4. Provides **type and level** of information you need;
5. Keeps **bias** to a minimum, and clearly indicates point of view;
6. Provides live **links** to related high-quality Web sites;
7. In the case of **commercial** sites, keeps advertising separate from content, and does not let advertisers determine content; and
8. Is clearly **organized and designed** for ease of use.

Each of these guidelines might require you to consider qualifications, compare and contrast information, evaluate depth of coverage, check and review data, look elsewhere, and more. More information on online research appears in Chapter 4.

READING AND ANALYZING VISUAL TEXTS

In this new era of information technology, we seem to be immersed in a visual culture requiring us to contend with and think critically about the constant flow of images we encounter—images that typically are reinforced by verbal elements.

Courses in engineering, social science, computer science, the humanities, fine arts, and elsewhere will require you to analyze and understand visual elements that are embedded in texts. Textbooks increasingly promote visuals as frames of reference that help readers comprehend and appreciate information. Some visual elements—charts, tables, and graphs—are integral to an understanding of verbal texts. Other visuals—comic art, drawings, photographs, paintings, and advertisements—offer contexts and occasions for enjoyment and deeper understanding of the reading, writing, and thinking processes. Visual images convey messages that often are as powerful as well-composed written texts. When they appear together, image and word are like French doors, both opening to reveal a world of heightened perception and understanding.

When visual elements stand alone, as in painting and photography, they often make profound statements about the human experience and frequently reflect certain persuasive purposes that are composed as skillfully as an argumentative essay. Consider, for example, Eddie Adams's potent stills of the execution of a prisoner by the notorious chief of the Saigon national police, General Nguyen Ngoc Loan. In the framed sequence, the chief of police aims his pistol at the head of the prisoner and presses the trigger, and the viewer, in that captured instant, sees the jolt of the prisoner's head and a sudden spurt of blood. Reproduced widely in the American press in February 1968, Adams's prize-winning image (p. 81) did as much as any written editorial to transform the national debate over the Vietnam War.

Although paintings, photographs, advertisements, and other artistic and design forms that rely heavily on visual elements often function as instruments of persuasion, great literary artists from Homer to Norman Mailer have captured the horrors of war as vividly as visual artists. Stephen Crane in *The Red Badge of Courage* illustrates the sordidness of America's Civil War in language as graphic as the images of the war's most noted photographer, Mathew Brady. Consider the visual impact of Crane's depiction of battlefield dead:

The corpse was dressed in a uniform that once had been blue but was now faded to a melancholy shade of green. The eyes, staring at the youth, had changed to the dull hue to be seen on the side of a dead fish. The mouth was opened. Its red had changed to an appalling yellow. Over the grey skin of the face ran little ants. One was trundling some sort of a bundle along the upper lip.

Ultimately, the best verbal and visual texts construct meaning in vivid and memorable ways. When used in combination, verbal and visual texts can mix words and images to create uniquely powerful theses and arguments.

Just as you analyze or take apart a verbal text during the process of critical reading, you also have to think critically about visual images or elements. If you encounter charts,

graphs, and tables in a text, you have to understand the information these visuals present, the implications of the numbers or statistics, the emphases and highlights that are conveyed, and the way the visual element—the picture, so to speak—shapes your understanding of the material and its relationship to the text. Sometimes the material presented in such visuals is technical, requiring you to carefully analyze, say, a bar graph: its structure, the relationship of parts to the whole, the assertions that are advanced, and the validity of the evidence conveyed. In short, critical reading of visual material is as demanding as critical reading of the printed word. Just as you often have to reread a verbal text, you also might have to return to charts, graphs, and tables, perhaps from a fresh perspective, in order to comprehend the content of the visual text.

The following questions can guide your critical analysis of such visual texts as charts, graphs, tables, photographs, maps, and Web pages:

- What is the design, format, and structure of the visual? Is it black and white, or are other colors used? How does the placement of design elements affect the message?
- Is the image abstract or realistic—or both? What is the relationship among the elements making up the image?
- Who is the intended audience? Does the image call for a specific audience response?
- What textual information do you immediately notice? What is the relationship between image and text?
- What is the purpose of the visual? What emotions or attitudes does the image convey?
- What thesis or point of view does the information in the visual suggest?
- What is the nature of the evidence, and how can it be verified?
- What emphases and relationships do you detect among the visual details?

When responding to charts, tables, and graphs, you must develop the confidence to read such visual texts accurately and critically. This means taking nothing for granted and trusting your ability to sift through the evidence and the images with a critical eye in order to understand the strategies the author or graphic artist has employed to convey a specific message.

By and large, informative visuals such as tables and graphs rarely have the striking impact of the sort of graphics found in the best commercial and political advertising or in the illustrations we encounter in slick magazines or cutting-edge comics or graphic novels. The visual elements used by advertisers, for example, take advantage of our innate capacity to be affected by symbols—from McDonald’s Golden Arch to the president framed by American flags. Such visual emblems convey unspoken ideas and have enormous power to promote products, personalities, and ideas. For example, the two powerful images on pages 30–31 convey important ideas about the cultures that produced them. Visual symbols achieve even more intense effects when they are reinforced by verbal elements.

When viewing art reproductions, photographs, advertisements, and cartoons from a critical perspective, you often have to detect the explicit and implicit messages being conveyed by certain images and symbols, and the design strategies that condition your response. Because these visuals combine many different elements, you have to consider all critical details: color, light, and shadow; the number and arrangement of objects and the relationships among them; the foregrounding and backgrounding of images within

the frame; the impact of typography; the impact of language if it is employed; the medium in which the visual appears; and the inferences and values that you draw from the overall composition. Learn to treat visuals in any medium as texts that need to be “read” critically. Every visual requires its own form of annotation, in which you analyze the selection and ordering of its parts and interpret the emotional effects and significant ideas and messages it presents. Throughout this text, paired “classic and contemporary” images such as the two on pages 30–31 give you opportunities to read visual texts with a critical eye.

NETWORKING

Applying 21st-Century Literacies

Analyzing a Web Page: Use the questions on page 28 to analyze the Web page shown below, particularly its use of images. To see an updated version of the page, or to see it in color, access the site via Chapter 1’s Networking page (at www.mhhe.com/mhreaderbrief1e). Consider expanding your analysis to the larger site.

The screenshot shows the homepage of The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. At the top left is a star logo and the text "The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy". At the top right is a search bar and the slogan "Sex. Really. STAYTEEN". The navigation menu includes links for About Us, National Data, State Data, Resources, Media, Press Room, Special Focus, Federal Funding, and Campaign Grants. On the left, a sidebar features a "DONATE HERE" button and links for RECEIVE OUR E-GRAM, STORE, PRINT THIS PAGE, E-MAIL THIS PAGE, CONTACT US, and RSS. Below these are links for press & events and special focus. The main content area features a large image of a woman's silhouette jumping, with a smartphone displaying an app called "iPlan" showing various icons. A callout box for "iPlan" says "Tips from Teen for Teens about Life, Love, Pregnancy and Not Getting Pregnant. Learn more." Below this are sections for PLANNING FOR CHILDREN MODULE, New Curriculum, Federal TP Money, New Abstinence Study, and National Day Supplies. At the bottom, there are links for about us and video.

The home page of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy (www.thenationalcampaign.org).



Classic and Contemporary Images

How Do We COMMUNICATE?

Using a Critical Perspective Carefully examine these two illustrations. What is your overall impression of these images? What details and objects in each scene capture your attention? What similarities and differences do you detect? How does each image communicate ideas and values about the culture that has produced it? Does one appeal to you more than the other? Why or why not?



Pulitzer Prize-winning combat photographer Joe Rosenthal captured this scene of U.S. Marines raising the American flag on the Pacific Island of Iwo Jima on February 25, 1945. The campaign to capture the island from Japanese troops cost nearly 7,000 American lives. Rosenthal's photo has been reproduced widely in the media and served as the model for the Marine Corps War Memorial in Washington, D.C.



Photographer Thomas E. Franklin captured a memorable moment in the wake of the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York City in September 2001.



CH 1

www.mhhe.com/mhreaderbrief1e

- *Learning > Writing to Learn Exercises:* Interactive exercises to develop and strengthen active reading skills
- *Research > Avoiding Plagiarism:* Interactive tutorial
- *Writing > Visual Rhetoric Tutorial:* Roles of images and design in academic writing, with interactive glossary
- *Image Gallery:* Chapter images in color
- *Reading and Responding:* Information on the authors in this chapter
- *Ch. 1 Networking*

