

**Brandeis Writing Program
Exercise Book**

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Introduction

How to Use This Book

This book of exercises is organized somewhat differently from last year's. Exercises have been collected under nine subject headings: Thesis, Motive, Evidence/Analysis, Structure/Transition, Introduction/Conclusion, Research/Sources, Style/Grammar, Teaching (with subheadings Class Discussion, Peer Review, and Conferences), and Miscellaneous (with subheadings Elements Exercises, Titles, Writing Process, Academic Honesty, and Introducing the Lens). You will recognize many of these headings from Gordon Harvey's *Elements of the Academic Essay*. The last two headings, Teaching and Miscellaneous, cover a wide variety of material that by and large addresses the more practical side of UWS—facilitating discussion, helping students develop a writing process, and tackling some of the more challenging aspects of the three essay types we teach.

In the back of this book, you will find a useful trio of indexes that organize the many exercises, handouts, and lesson plans this book contains with respect to the close reading, lens analysis, and research essay units. Each index preserves the nine subject headings from the general Table of Contents but lists only those exercises relevant to each essay type. Those exercises that are applicable to more than one essay type are listed more than once. You should not feel limited, however, from choosing an exercise designed for a different essay type; most of the material included in this book is easily adapted and applied to any unit. (If you do modify an exercise for a different essay type, be sure to send us the new exercise for inclusion in next year's book.)

~~—This new organization for the UWS Exercise Book mirrors that of the online Exercise Library, available on the Writing Program website at:~~

~~<http://www.brandeis.edu/writingprogram/instructors-faculty/uws/library/index.html>~~

~~All the exercises printed in this book are available at the Exercise Library in HTML, Word, and PDF formats for your easy use and printing. Like this book, the website is updated every year with the exercises, lesson plans, handouts, and sample materials you submit.~~

Though you are encouraged, whenever possible, to use examples from your own students' writing with these exercises, samples of student writing have been included under many subject headings for you to use in class. An appendix in the back offers additional sample student writing. The handouts and student writing samples have been printed without page numbers so that they can be easily photocopied for use in class. Instructors are encouraged to creatively adapt the exercises and lesson plans to their own course topics and to the writing needs of their own students.

If you create a useful variation on an exercise, a new handout, or invent an exercise from scratch, we would like to include it in next year's edition. Please send all useful materials to Lisa Rourke, Director of First Year Writing (lrourke@brandeis.edu).

How to Present an In Class Writing Exercise

The effectiveness of in class writing exercises depends as much on execution of the exercise in class as it does on the design and preparation of the exercise beforehand. Below are the steps I have found most effective for presenting an in class exercise. These can, of course, be tweaked depending on your teaching goals, but this structure is generally most effective.

Step #1: Introduce the topic – Initiate the exercise by telling the class what you intend to work on. This can be as simple as stating, “I want to work on openers today,” but is best stated in terms of a teaching goal: “I want to develop a set of strategies for writing effective opening sentences in your essays.” Introducing exercises in this way also serves to clarify that the class is moving on to a new topic.

Step #2: Motivate the exercise – There are two primary motivations for writing exercises: a) because students often struggle with a particular writing element and b) because the writing element is important for crafting an effective essay. The former typically needs to be explained to students by the instructor. I typically explain how students have struggled with the subject of the lesson in the past, either on previous essays or in previous courses, and always make sure to give specific examples of weaknesses and the response comments I typically write in the margins. The latter should be approached as a topic of class discussion during which you encourage your students to consider for themselves why the subject of your lesson is important for academic writing.

Step #3: Explain the process of the exercise – You may choose to explain the exercise all at once or one step at a time. I have found that explaining the entire exercise at the outset reduces students’ confusion. When explaining the exercise, be sure to state how much time you expect students to spend on each part and to give them warnings about how much time they have left.

Step #4: Complete the exercise – As students carry out the exercise, be sure to glance at their work to be sure they are following your guidelines and generally proceeding as planned.

Step #5: Discuss the exercise – Never end an exercise without at least some discussion. One of the best strategies for generating discussion is to have students share some or all of what they have written. If students are modeling elements of the academic essay—thesis, motive, stitching, &c.—you might ask the other students to comment on the effectiveness of a few students’ work.

Step #6: Link the exercise to the upcoming assignment – This works best if articulated by the students. Ask the discussion question, “What ideas did you generate in this exercise that will be useful for your upcoming essay?” This not only maximizes the usefulness of the exercise for the students, but can give you, the instructor, some feedback on what students are taking away from your exercise.

Preparing your lesson plans according to this structure has the additional benefit of ensuring that your in class exercises are effective from a teaching standpoint. If you can not motivate the exercise or explain how it is relevant to the upcoming essay, you should probably choose something else for your students to work on in class.

Tips for Designing Your Own in Class Exercises

Tip #1 – The most effective exercises are not simply culled from a handbook (like this one) but are tailored to the specific writing needs of your students. Different classes of students will have vastly different writing needs. In this way, this handbook should serve as a rough guide to the most common writing needs of UWS students. You will likely want to tweak exercises in this handbook in a way that addresses particular weaknesses in your students' writing.

Tip #2 – Use students' own writing as much as possible. The most effective way to collect sample theses, motives, &c. for use in class is to ask your students to e-mail you these items. You will then be able to choose the ones that best illustrate the points you want to make for use in class. Another way to do this is to have students find examples in their peers' papers. They can either bring these examples to class or e-mail them to you. Finally, after grading a batch of essays, flip back through them and copy examples of writing elements that you commented on regularly. Look both at celebratory comments and corrective ones, as it is typically best to collect examples of both weak and strong writing (e.g. a set of strong motives and a set of weak ones). I have tried to include the use of students' own writing in as many exercises in this handbook as possible.

Tip #3 - Plan the exercises in your next unit before you have passed back the essays for the previous unit. Though this essentially doubles your work load by combining grading with course preparation, it will save you time in the long run. More importantly, it will help you fulfill the objectives of tips 1 and 2. While you are grading, the weaknesses in your students writing will be freshest in your mind and, as a result, it will be easier to tailor exercises to those specific needs. In addition, you will have the most useful materials for creating such exercises in the form of your students' own writing. While your students' essays are still in your possession, you can stockpile examples of strong theses/weak theses, strong motives/weak motives, strong analysis/weak analysis, &c. in order to create exercises in which students revise weaker examples according to the models the stronger examples provide.

Tip #4 – Plan your lessons a few at a time (instead of one at a time). Similar to tip #3, planning several lessons at once allows you to develop interlocking exercises. For example, you can encourage students to develop theses during one class and then work on ways to motivate them in the following class. You could even brainstorm the set of claims you would need to prove those theses during an evidence/structure exercise in the class after that.

Tip #5 – Make your exercises both individual and collaborative. In class writing, small group work, and class discussion are the three primary learning arrangements of a writing seminar. Try to design your in class exercises to include as many of these groupings as possible. This will make your exercises feel more dynamic and keep students more focused, since they are not forced to concentrate on a single task for a long period of time. The typical format is to start with an in class writing assignment, then have students break into groups to synthesize their written responses, and then to discuss the groups' findings as a class. However, it is possible to alter this basic structure in a variety of creative ways.

Thesis

Thesis Exercise #1 – Deriving a Thesis from Evidence (Ryan Wepler)

Guide students through the thought process of creating a thesis based on a selection of evidence. Because thesis creation requires a great deal of critical thought, this exercise doubles as a thesis exercise and a critical thinking exercise. In this form, this exercise works best for close reading essays.

1. Choose a series of short passages from the work your students have been assigned to close read. These should be inherently interesting moments, but ones for which you do not have a pre-formed thesis in mind. Combine these passages into a one page handout and distribute the handout to your students to begin the exercise.
 2. After giving students a few minutes to read the handout, ask them to write for 4-5 minutes about a common theme they detect in the series of passages.
 3. Divide students into groups of 3-4 and ask the groups to discuss commonalities in their close readings and to produce a thesis statement based on their individual readings. Make sure each group writes its thesis statement down. [You might provide a sample thesis statement as a model for them to emulate].
 4. Ask one member from each group to write his or her group's thesis on the board.
 5. Discuss the theses, assessing them in terms of the criteria set forth by Gordon Harvey and revising as necessary.
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Thesis Exercise #2 – Essay-Specific Theses (Kerry Walk)

Compile (or make up) both problematic and excellent theses in response to your essay assignment. Ask students to assess each one in terms of the criteria for "thesis" set forth by Gordon Harvey. Follow up by having students draft or revise their own theses.

Thesis Exercise #3 – Thesis Revision (Ryan Wepler)

Ask students to e-mail you theses (one apiece) that they have composed in response to an essay assignment. Select 6-8 of them for a handout. After distributing the handout in class, run the discussion as follows.

1. Workshop one or two of them as a group according to Harvey's criteria.
2. Ask students to break into groups and revise the other theses according to Harvey's criteria.
3. Reconvene, ask groups to share their revised theses, discuss as a class.

Thesis Exercise #4 – Thesis Workshop (Kerry Walk)

Once students have a draft in hand, put them in groups of 3 or 4 and have them workshop their theses. This exercise will work only if you've shown them how to assess a thesis (see previous exercises)

Thesis Exercise #5 – Developing a Thesis as a Class (Kerry Walk)

Choose a text (or issue, event, object, or phenomenon) that students *won't* be writing on, then, as a group, go through the stages of developing a motivated thesis about it. This exercise models the thinking that students need to do. Follow up by asking them to draft a thesis of their own.

Thesis Exercise #6 – The Thesis Game (OSU Writing Program)

This will make it fun for students to write theses and also make them realize the difficulties before they sit down to write one for their own final paper. Students will base each of their weak theses on those found in WA 121-131.

Before the Game, teach students the weak thesis examples in *Writing Analytically* pp. 121-131 or on the “A Weak Thesis Statement...” handout on the following page

The Game:

Break class into groups of 3 or 4

[The original exercise involves an overhead projector that the teacher uses to display an image and the students use to display their thesis statements. Depending on your classroom, images can be displayed on an overhead, using a computer/projector, or on good old paper. Students can write their thesis statements on the board.]

ROUND 1 (instructor provides an image and designates a weak thesis type to use)

- Each group writes a weak thesis, and then revises it. [on an overhead sheet w/ erasable marker]
- 1 person from each group displays the weak thesis, and explains the problem. The student then displays the revised thesis, explains their group's thought process & why this is stronger.
- Class critiques strong thesis. What needs to be more specific? What needs to be revised? Does it have tension/complexity?
- Based on this, the class “revises” the strong thesis
- Each group gets a turn
- Class votes on best strong thesis from the round

ROUND 2 (instructor selects another image and another weak thesis type and rounds continue like this)

- Each time the group is “up” a different group member presents.
- This game can go as many rounds as the instructor likes. It is recommended that the game consists of several rounds—it allows students to consider multiple “weak” theses, and they get the chance to improve the strength of their revised theses
- As each round finishes, remind students that strong analysis is the key; theses do not develop on their own, they evolve based on analysis
- Each round class votes on groups with the best-revised thesis. [They can't vote for their own group]
- At the end of the game—a winner is decided.

Depending on instructor's choice, winner may receive candy, extra credit in their participation [the logistics of this are up to the instructor, though students usually love the sound of extra credit no matter how it works]

Complete class with an emphasis on the evolving thesis, analysis, and a desire for a complex research paper—not one that ignores possible complications or contradictions. Thesis writing needs thought and practice like anything else.

What did students learn today?

Students practiced writing theses, revising them, and learning how to make them evolve in complexity. As a result they should have a good understanding of popular mistakes that freshmen tend to make, ways to revise them. They should be well aware that perfect theses do not simply appear on their paper—students must generate them by revising and revising again.

Thesis Exercise #7 – Mimicking Thesis Structure (Ryan Wepler)

This exercise works best if students have brought in thesis statements (or drafts containing thesis statements). Its best asset is demonstrating how the structure of a strong thesis statement can reveal conceptual gaps and other weaknesses in students own thesis statements.

1. Assign students to bring their intros or thesis statements to class.
2. Pass out a sample introduction with a strong thesis statement. The sample paragraph below works well for this exercise. Identify the thesis and discuss its sentence structure.
3. Once you have a clear model for the structure, ask students to rewrite their own thesis statements in a way that mirrors the sample you have brought to class.
4. Ask students to read their original thesis statements and their revisions. Discuss

This exercise usually takes about 20 minutes. To add complexity, you can bring two or three model thesis statements with different sentence structures to class and ask your students to rewrite their theses in several different ways.

Love and the Trauma of Resistance in Gayl Jones's *Corregidora*

by Stephanie Li

Shifting between scenes of nineteenth-century slave life in Brazil and contemporary urban America, Gayl Jones's *Corregidora* examines continuities between the physical enslavement of black women and modern cycles of abuse. Although the *Corregidora* women are subjected to immense violence and exploitation, Jones foregrounds their demand to overcome and commemorate their traumatic history. However, while the slave past is ever present, the novel does not focus on Great Gram's resistance to *Corregidora* during her enslavement to him. Descriptions of her life with him suggest a highly ambiguous relationship that complicates conventional conceptions of resistance, agency, and desire. Great Gram remains living with *Corregidora* well after emancipation and when she eventually flees his plantation, she leaves her daughter behind and becomes even more vulnerable to his perverse cruelties. Martin's question to the elder *Corregidora* women--"How much was hate for *Corregidora* and how much was love" (131)--highlights the troubling intersection between abuse and desire examined in the novel. By exploding the dichotomy between victim and abuser, Jones challenges the notion of any simplistic or singularly directed conception of resistance.

Source: *Callaloo* 29.1 (2006): 131-150

Thesis Exercise #8 – Thesis Fill-in-the-Blank (Ryan Wepler)

In preparation for this exercise students must bring to class their intro paragraph with the thesis statement removed. I typically complete this exercise either during the class that rough drafts are due or the class before. The directions I give the class are as follows:

1. Pass your thesis-less intro to someone who hasn't read it already.
2. Recipients of thesis-less intros, write an "M" next to the motive sentence.
3. Identify the "motivating move" from the "Motivating Moves" handout
4. Write a thesis—as specific as possible—based upon what you see in your intro.
5. Pass it back to its original owner.
6. Freewriting (if time): Authors, look carefully at the thesis that was proposed for you.
Write on the sheet
 - a. How does your peer's compare to yours?
 - b. Why might he/she have proposed that intro?
 - c. Is it more specific than yours?
 - d. How could you make it—or yours—more specific?

Obviously, step 4 is the essential step for this exercise, as it gives students practice writing theses and feedback on their intros. You can alter or skip the other steps according to your needs and time constraints

Thesis Exercise #9 – Argument and Counterargument (Ryan Wepler)

This exercise works best after students have begun writing their essays, but before they have completed their drafts.

1. Ask students to bring their thesis statements (1-2 sentences) to class (or they can write them down in class).
2. Have them pass their theses two students to the left, and ask each student to write a counterargument (three sentences or less) below the thesis (3-4 minutes).
3. Then ask students to pass the papers two more students to the left, and ask each student to write a possible response to the counterargument (three sentences or less) in support of the thesis (3-4 minutes).
4. If the exercise seems to be going well, you may continue the sequence of counterarguments and responses.
5. Discuss the exercise for about five minutes afterward, focusing especially on how students might integrate their peers' ideas into their essays.

This exercise should take about 15-20 minutes depending on the number of arguments and counterarguments.

One spot in which this exercise can fail is if a students' thesis is so obvious that there are no plausible counterarguments, a critical error that needs to be addressed as early in the writing process as possible. The best way to correct this is to allow the students offering counterarguments object that a thesis is platitudinous. The student assigned to respond to the counterargument may defend the thesis either by proposing a way in which it is not obvious or by suggesting a way that it could be refined in order to make it more contestable. Discussions that develop along these lines will be more focused on thesis/motive than on analysis

Thesis Exercise #10 – Constructing reasonable arguments (Amanda Hemmesch)

“When you construct a reasonable argument, your goal is not simply to win or to have the last word. Your aim is to explain your understanding of the truth about a subject or to propose the best solution available for solving a problem—without being needlessly combative.”
(Diana Hacker, *A Writer's Reference*, 67)

This is your opportunity to contribute to the dialogue on a topic!

Steps in the process:

1. Think about your position in context
2. Establish credibility with your skeptical audience: what is your position and why should they listen to you?
3. Use persuasive arguments and specific evidence to support your position
—Types of evidence: examples, expert opinion, previous research
4. Acknowledge counterarguments, but explain why your position is stronger

Identify the steps in the process. In the paragraph below,

1. *Underline* the context for the argument. Is the context clear? Does the argument relate to the context?
2. *Circle* where the author establishes their position - this is usually the thesis that guides the essay or the topic sentence that guides the paragraph. Does the author establish credibility? How?
3. Place *Brackets* around examples of evidence. Is the evidence specific or vague? What type of evidence is it? Does it support the argument the author is trying to make?
4. Use a *Squiggly Underline* to identify where the author considers counterarguments. Does the author successfully explain why they believe their position is better than alternatives?
5. What other revisions would you suggest to improve clarity and flow?

Make 'Em Green With Envv: How Going Green Can Enhance Brandeis' Image

Much recent attention has been paid to how environmentally friendly and sustainable practices may benefit institutions and individuals. Brandeis' emphasis on social justice makes this institution well-suited to reap the benefits of going green, since many students, faculty, and staff believe that it is desirable to be fair to people and to our planet. This far-reaching ethos penetrates the university and may make it easier for Brandeis to transition to green living than other institutions that may not be as willing to embrace environmentally friendly practices despite the green movement. For example, in recent years students have organized to collect the recyclables placed in the dining halls' trash bins to provide a striking illustration of how quickly each individual's careless consumption adds up. As another instance of Brandeis' willingness to embrace the green movement, this year administrators provided undergraduates with reusable aluminum bottles in an effort to combat the wastefulness of disposable plastic water bottles. These efforts not only benefit the environment by raising awareness and providing alternatives to wasteful consumption, but also may improve Brandeis' image as a university committed to social justice. Not only do we preach the values of sustainability, but we also make real efforts to practice what we preach. This genuine commitment to environmental sustainability may enhance Brandeis' image by highlighting our community's commitment to excellence within and outside the classroom. While the initial cost of green programs may be higher than those of standard consumption practices, the long term financial benefits to the university, such as reducing costs by consuming less energy, will outweigh these costs.

Weak Thesis Statements and How to Fix them

A weak thesis statement:

...makes no claim

“This paper will examine the similarities and differences between two articles.”

Solution: Raise specific issues for the essay to explore.

...is obviously true or a statement of fact

“Tourists are often out of place in other cultures.”

Solution: Find an avenue of inquiry—a question about the fact or an issue raised by them. Make an assertion that the reader could disagree with.

...restates conventional wisdom or a cliché

“We shouldn’t judge others because it’s the inside that counts.”

Solution: Seek to “complicate” your thesis. See more than one point of view on your subject. Offer something new to the “cliché.”

...offers personal conviction as the basis for the claim

“Clearly, Kincaid is being one-sided.”

Solution: Treat your ideas as hypotheses to be tested, rather than obvious truths. Maintain some distance from your subject.

...makes an overly broad claim

“Limerick shows her knowledge about the West.”

Solution: Convert broad, generic categories into more specific, complex assertions. Find ways to bring out the complexity of your argument.

Revising Thesis Statements (Lisa Rourke)

Example of an arguable thesis statement:

Clerval is the true villain in *Frankenstein*. Although he appears to epitomize the loyal friend, he shirks his responsibilities to Victor, which ultimately causes Victor's downfall.

What is ineffective about the following thesis statements? Modify the statements to make them more effective: groups 1, 2 and 3 modify statement #1; groups 4 and 5 modify statement #2; groups 6 and 7 modify statement #3; groups 8 and 9 modify statement #4.

1. "Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* tells the tale of a scientist who meddles with the natural order and attempts to play God."

2. "This paper will examine the similarities and differences between two points of view in *Frankenstein*."

3. "Individuals encountering the Creature are frightened away by his hideous exterior."

4. "In *Frankenstein*, Shelley shows her vast knowledge about contemporary 19th century scientific principles."

Counter-arguments to a Thesis (Lisa Rourke)

Thesis: Clerval is the true villain in *Frankenstein*. Although he appears to epitomize the loyal friend, he shirks his responsibilities Victor, which ultimately causes Victor's downfall. A close reading of the text reveals the many missed opportunities that Clerval has to intervene with Victor and prevent him from pursuing his research.

Directions: Read each piece of evidence and determine a possible counter-argument.

1. When Clerval meets Victor immediately following the creature's birth, he nurses Victor back to health but conceals Victor's illness from his family. Frankenstein remembers that Clerval, knowing that Victor's father was old and that Elizabeth would be devastated, "spared them this grief by concealing the extent of my disorder" (43).

If Clerval were a true friend, he would not lie to Victor's family but would, instead, involve them in the recovery process.

Counter-argument:

2. After Victor recovers from his first bout with illness he brings Clerval to the university. Victor explains, "When I was otherwise quite restored to health, the sight of a chemical instrument would renew all the agony of my nervous symptoms. Henry saw this, and had removed all the apparatus from my view" (48). Clerval bears responsibility for Victor's continued agonies because rather than determining its root cause he treats the symptoms.

Counter-argument:

3. After Victor and Clerval have been traveling through Europe together, Victor tells Clerval that he wishes to tour Scotland alone, but his real plan is to construct the female monster. He tells Clerval, "I may be absent a month or two; but do not interfere with my motions, I entreat you: leave me to peace and solitude for a short time..." (135). Victor observes that "Henry wished to dissuade me; but seeing me bent on this plan ceased to remonstrate" (135). As a good friend and having observed Victor's agitated state, Clerval should have probed more. If he had, Victor would possibly have confessed his plan and never attempted to build the female creature.

A Strong Thesis Statement....

.....CLEARLY ARTICULATES WHAT THE ESSAY WILL EXPLORE OR ARGUE

“The Player’s speech, delivered in Act 2, Scene 2, reveals an interplay between emotion and action, shaping Hamlet’s analysis of his own tragedy and directing his revenge against the King.”

.....USES SPECIFIC TERMS, INTRODUCING THE KEY IDEA[S] FOR THE ESSAY

“In Claudius’s soliloquy, performed in Act 3, Scene 3 (‘O my offense is rank’), the King reveals an inner duel between his rational desire to act virtuously and his impulsive gravitation toward material gain and selfishness.”

.....CAN BE SUPPORTED BY EVIDENCE (IS STRONGLY ROOTED IN SPECIFIC MOMENTS OF A TEXT)

“For all that it shows about Claudius, the 3.3 soliloquy actually holds the key to an understanding of Hamlet and his dilemma. Illuminating the similarities between the ‘villain’ and the ‘hero,’ the prayer speech casts such doubt on Hamlet’s virtuous imperative that it inverts the two characters’ moral positions.”

.....IS TRUE BUT ARGUABLE – IT IS NOT A PLAIN STATEMENT OF FACT

“Hamlet’s soliloquy suggests that he has not fallen into lunacy of an earthly sort; instead, he is possessed by the devil, just as Horatio feared would happen when Hamlet spoke to the Ghost in Act I.”

How to complicate a thesis statement (Cory Nelson)

- Focus on *how* a theme surfaces in a text, rather than *what* the theme is. If you have written an essay with a thesis statement like, “In *Equus*, Peter Shaffer suggests that it is better to be insane,” ask yourself how Shaffer makes this suggestion. What *specific* images and words does Shaffer use to describe everyday life? How do those images convey a sense of distaste or contempt for normality? How do his descriptions of normal life differ from his descriptions of abnormal, or “mad,” pursuits? As you ask yourself “how,” keep in mind that your essay should do more than quote a character’s words to support your argument. The project of a close reading essay is to put pressure on the language – to consider things like word choice, connotation, tone of voice, repetition, recurring images, alliteration, and rhythm.
- Consider the counterargument. If you have argued that “*Equus* demonstrates that only the mad can truly be free,” try thinking about whether the play also suggests that mad characters are persecuted and suffer pain. Note that the “counterargument” does not need to be well-developed in the text. You may simply find one or two moments of contradiction, when a character or a scene does not fit the pattern.
- Take the road less traveled. If you have written an essay that argues “The character of Alan Strang demonstrates that we are all longing for an authentic and undiminished experience,” try thinking about how a minor character (like Jill) reveals a similar dynamic. Then, if appropriate, compare and contrast.
- Connect a primary theme to a secondary theme. For instance, if your thesis statement argues that “*Equus* shows that we all long for human connection,” think about how this relates to other themes in the play: our desire to access the divine, our fear that we are losing touch with our cultural roots. In other words, teach your reader something by showing how the play’s primary themes are intertwined with more subtle concerns.
- Explore different kinds of evidence – don’t limit yourself to the spoken word. You have a distinct advantage in this class, given that we are reading dramatic literature. Try thinking about how things like lighting cues, set design, costumes, stage directions, and stagecraft (various “special effects” on stage) contribute to the play’s themes. Thus, a thesis that argues “*Equus* indicates that it is mad to live a life without passion” might think about how the play creates a world that is sterile, isolating, and without feeling and how it *contrasts* that with a fantasy world. (This tip can be adapted for other genres – if you’re studying poetry, think about things like meter and rhyme scheme. If you’re studying a novel, think about things like narrative perspective [who gets to speak?] and what elements of the narrative are elided.)

Lesson Plan: Testing a Thesis (Judy Swan, Princeton)

Lesson objective: (1) To test an argument before committing to it in a draft and (2) to explore the relationship between thesis and argument [again].

Total estimated time: 50-70 minutes

Additional outcomes: Students get a chance to keep talking through their individual topics before the draft is due

Assignment sequence that is underway: Develop an argument about a problem in some current area of gene therapy.

Work completed before class: Students have done general research for their essays and have drafted a preliminary thesis paragraph.

Step 1: Have students read a group of potential theses (drawn from the previous semester's work on the same unit) and rank them by their potential. This involved discussion of the theses themselves and of ideas about thesis in general. (10 min)

Step 2: Group examination of 3 specific theses. The theses varied in the ways you'd expect; most promised too much, and several implied interesting sounding problems for which they offered totally indefensible theses. I asked them to take the statement and work backwards into the introduction and forward into the argument. If this is to be the thesis, what does the introduction need to accomplish? What must be set up to get us to the point of suggesting this argument? What kinds of issues does this thesis raise for development in the essay? Where is this paper going to go? We then considered recasting the thesis to something more workable, looking again at the effects of that change on the introduction and the main arguments. (15 min)

Step 3: Group work on 3 more theses, replicating the large-group work. They were then to rank the theses in terms of 'productivity': Which thesis seems most likely to produce an interesting and coherent argument? For those thesis that were "not yet ready for drafting," they were asked to recast the thesis and problem to find something more successful. (20 min)

Step 4: Check in again to see how each group has ranked the theses. (5 min)

Step 5: Work on your own preliminary thesis. (5-10 min)

Step 6: (If there's time) Share this reworked thesis with one other person and discuss. (5-10 min)

I followed this class with a workshop session of point outlines: Students arrived with 4 copies of the points they planned to make in their essays, and they workshopped them for the session. Several students felt these two assignments essentially gave them ways of testing their arguments out in detail before they went to draft; they felt the resulting working drafts were more like later drafts, and they could concentrate in revision less on figuring out what they wanted to say and more on figuring out how they could best say it.

Lesson Plan: Thesis and Motive in the Close Reading Essay (Jessica Sternfeld)

This series of exercises deals with motive and thesis. We begin with these concepts at the forefront of our discussion, but gradually they become incorporated into our discussion of the material we're studying. This lesson is for the second day of class.

Lesson objective: Finding a motive from a question; find a thesis from a motive; setting that thesis forth in a clear, true but arguable, and effective manner. It's the first, and most basic, series of exercises on thesis and motive, with more to follow in the coming weeks.

Total estimated time: 50-60 min

Additional outcomes: Students write about and discuss the musical they must focus on for their essays.

Assignment sequence that is underway: Close reading of *Jesus Christ Superstar*.

Work completed before class: Students have seen the film version of *JCS*. They have also written a pre-draft that asks them to pose 5 questions about characters' actions in the musical, especially those that seem strange or confusing. (They don't know it yet, but this pre-draft will become a list of 5 possible motives for papers.)

Step 1: We quickly read through and discuss Harvey's definitions of motive and thesis, focusing on the idea of true but arguable, just to get the two vocabulary words on the table. (5 min)

Step 2: We look at 5 thesis statements from "students." Some of these I've borrowed from my colleagues, others I invented. None of them has anything to do with musicals, they're just typically problematic, except for the promising final one. (5 min)

Step 3: In threes, the class looks at 3 examples of professional published writing, and they find the motive and thesis. The subject matter of the articles is related to musicals, but not specifically to the one we're studying. (10 min)

Step 4: This step moves us into the realm of the material we're studying. We look at an example of a student's motive/thesis paragraph from an earlier semester, so this example actually answers the essay question that the students themselves will be answering in a week or so. (The essay is a close reading question.) If no examples from earlier semesters are available, I invent one.

Before I even give them the student thesis, we view the scene that it addresses. This moves the focus of the class quite boldly away from thesis and into the realm of the musical. We take a moment to discuss the scene in question then look at the student thesis from a draft - it's problematic, controversial, and therefore handy for generating discussion. The students, therefore, are debating two things at once: the merits of the thesis, and the meaning of the scene. (20 min)

Step 5: We turn to their pre-draft 1, which asked them to pose 5 questions about the motivations of characters in the musical. In threes, they swap questions and settle on the one that seems the most confusing or intriguing to them - the one they'd most like to discuss, or to find an answer to. When

each trio has chosen one question, they report it to the class. We agree on one of these four, and view the scene in question, if necessary. We try to settle on an explanation to the question, or we choose several possible answers. Individually, students write the answer in the form of a sentence or two. They have just generated a motive and thesis! We share some of our thesis statements and discuss whether they're true and/or arguable, remembering the problems we saw in the examples. (15-20 min)

Lesson Plan: Thesis in a Lens Essay (Steven Lestition, Princeton)

Assignments underway: Students will be beginning their Unit 2 paper, which will ask them to use a “theoretical lens” to interpret some original source text (i.e. a poem), as it relates to the theme of the course (the structure of imagination in ... poetry, in this case).

Lesson objective: Learning to apply aspects of a “theoretical lens” to a text. Learning to recognize what is a “common ground” or already “accepted knowledge” that a reader in the class can be expected to know, versus that aspect of a text which might require more thought and explanation in order for the writer and reader to understand it. How to develop an interesting problem or question, as well as an arguable thesis, about a text, on the basis of those considerations.

Work to be completed before class:

- 1) Select a poem or two by the author we’re reading (Robert Frost) which you think is particularly “imaginative” and write a short paragraph explaining why.
- 2) Students should then read (or re-read) selections from four of the theorists we read about the structure of the imagination in poetry--Elaine Scarry, Helen Vendler, Robert Pinsky and Robert Frost—and pick out a passage or two which they think “applies” to the poem and confirms their ideas about why it is imaginative. Write a few lines to explain how & why that is so.
- 3) Students should also note at least one other passage, in each of the theorists, which raises questions or issues which they think might potentially apply to passages of the poems they have selected, but are not sure how they would explain that application, or the insight that would emerge from such a view of the poem. Students should also make an “inventory list” of those components of the theories which they do not understand, or which they cannot readily apply to the poems.

Structure of the class session on this topic:

- 1) Students share their written statements with members of their 3-person “Writing/ Discussion Groups” and discuss four issues:
 - a) Do the other two members of the group think that the theoretical approach the other student uses is a good explanation of the imaginative component of the poem in question?
 - b) Might any of the theoretical insights into poetry and poetic structure that that the student was not able to apply to his or her choice of “imaginative” poems indeed contribute to a fuller understanding of the poem?
 - c) As a result of discussing “a” and “b” above, each student should list the “gaps” they see in their understanding of how aspects of the imagination works in their chosen poem(s). What more, therefore, needs to be further explained? What aspect of their knowledge or understanding is inadequate?
 - d) With the help of the other two students in the group, each student should formulate an introductory statement (for an essay) which would state what he or she understands about how and where the imagination is at work in one or another poem they’ve chosen—and what they think, therefore, a reader might also readily

recognize and understand about the poem--but then also specify what further issues or aspects of the imaginative elements of the poem they would wish to know, or wish to be able to explain more fully. Each student should write down a few sentences saying what still remains a “puzzle” for them.

Additional outcomes: Distinguishing between easy descriptions and applications of a theory versus more challenging ones. Deciding what aspect of these issues goes into an introduction, what aspects should emerge from the course of the analysis and reflection on the text.

Estimated time: 30-60 minutes outside of class. 30-45 minutes in class.

Sample Student Theses

Thesis: your main insight or idea about a text or topic, and the *main* proposition that your essay demonstrates. It should be true but arguable (not obviously or patently true, but one alternative among several), be limited enough in scope to be argued in a short composition and with available evidence, and get to the heart of the text or topic being analyzed (not be peripheral). It should be stated early in some form and at some point recast sharply (not just be implied), and it should govern the whole essay (not disappear in places). —Gordon Harvey, “Elements of the Academic Essay”

Hamlet: “‘Tis now the very witching time of night” (III.ii.351ff.)

Thesis 1: In a *Macbeth*-like soliloquy delivered by Hamlet in Act III, Shakespeare displays a great example of his profound mastery of the English language and shows why not even short passages of his greatest play, *Hamlet*, should be cut in production. Truly, Shakespeare is the greatest writer of all time.

Thesis 2: Hamlet’s soliloquy suggests as no other passage does that he has not fallen into lunacy of an earthly sort but rather is clearly possessed by the devil, just as Horatio feared would happen when Hamlet spoke to the Ghost in Act I.

The Lead Player: “ ‘The rugged Pyrrhus’ ” (II.ii.413ff.)

Thesis 3: Many directors fail to appreciate that the Player’s speech reveals an interplay between emotion and action, shapes Hamlet’s analysis of his own tragedy, and directs his revenge against the King.

Claudius: “O, my offence is rank, it smells to heaven” (III.iii.36ff.)

Thesis 4: As we reach the end of the soliloquy, we realize that the King is not asking his God to forgive him but is praying for the desire to repent.

Thesis 5: Why waste so much time with this speech. So what if it shows some remorse and indecision in Claudius’s character. This scene really isn’t necessary, one might think. However, it is extremely necessary. It’s not that it shows remorse (which it actually doesn’t), but that it shows Claudius acting remorseful. This scene reveals that Claudius’s character is only two-dimensional.

Thesis 6: In his soliloquy, Claudius reveals an inner duel between his rational desire to act virtuously and his impulsive gravitation toward material gain and selfishness.

Thesis 7: For all that it shows about Claudius, the speech actually holds the key to an understanding of Hamlet and his dilemma. Illuminating the similarities between the “villain” and the “hero,” the prayer speech casts such doubt on Hamlet’s virtuous imperative that it inverts the two characters’ moral positions.

Theses on Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass

- Thesis 1: If a child grows up without his mother, he may lose his devotion for her, as did Douglass, but she will perpetually care and worry about her child.
- Thesis 2: The description of Douglass's aunt's beating is the most important part of the first chapter. It is the major turning point in his life, it leaves a deep impression on him, and it convinces readers of the evils of slavery.
- Thesis 3: Looking at Douglass's discussion of his heritage, we must explore what point Douglass is attempting to make about his racial identification. What makes him discredit this rumor when he so clearly wants a foundation and an identity?
- Thesis 4: Douglass does not condemn white people in his narrative, but rather the institution of slavery itself.
- Thesis 5: But through his choice of genre, Douglass can *show* rather than *tell* why slavery has to be abolished.... His choices of structure and vocabulary, and the hidden implications of his statements, allow Douglass to sneak deep into his reader's conscience (and hold abolitionists to *his* truths) without, on the surface, calling attention to any provocative argument against slavery.

Motive

Motive Exercise #1 – Identify the Motive (Ryan Wepler)

The following exercise works best when introducing motive to your students. Be sure to reinforce that the motive is not simply a concept but is a specific and identifiable sentence in the intro paragraph:

1. Photocopy and distribute the “Motivating Moves” and “Sample UWS introductions With Motives” handouts on the following pages.
2. Ask students to write a “T” next to the thesis and an “M” next to the motives on the handout with samples of student writing.
3. After students have identified the motives, have them work with a partner to identify the motivating move employed by the author.
4. Reconvene as a group and ask the groups to share their findings.

This exercise typically takes 20-25 minutes. It is possible to substitute your students’ own writing for the “Sample UWS introductions With Motives” handout.

Motivating Moves

Match the “motivating moves” at right
with writing samples from the disciplines at left.

Please note that each writing sample makes more than one motivating move.

Good news: There are no wrong answers!

Published Writing from the Disciplines

Sociology: How does one explain the seeming inconsistency between the responses by the Hispanic community to the 1992 poll, on the one hand, and the general pride that most Americans express about their immigrant roots, on the other?

History: New York’s American Art-Union offers an opportunity to examine, in one significant context, the struggle that defined the social role of art and artists in the antebellum North.

Environmental Science: Although the origin of these sources [of oxygenated organic compounds] is still unclear, we suggest that oxygenated species could be formed via the oxidation of hydrocarbons in the atmosphere, the photochemical degradation of organic matter in the oceans, and direct emissions from terrestrial vegetation.

Psychology (Freud, in fact!): The play is built on Hamlet’s hesitations over fulfilling the task of revenge that is assigned to him; but its text offers no reasons or motivations for these hesitations, and an immense variety of attempts at interpreting them have failed to produce a result.

Some Motivating Moves

1. The truth isn’t what one would expect, or what it might appear to be on first reading.
2. The knowledge on the topic has heretofore been limited.
3. There’s a mystery or puzzle or question here that needs answering.
4. Published views of the matter conflict.
5. We can learn about a larger phenomenon by studying this smaller one.
6. This seemingly tangential or insignificant matter is actually important or interesting.
7. There’s an inconsistency, contradiction, or tension here that needs explaining.
8. The standard opinion(s) need challenging or qualifying.

Motive Exercise #2 – Motivating Motive (Kerry Walk, Princeton)

Read sample introductions of student or professional writing and ask students to underline the thesis and motive. And/or ask them to say, after reading each one, whether they would keep reading, and why. The difference between a boring essay and a compelling one usually has to do with motive. Follow up by having students make up a motive for a motiveless intro.

If you have trouble finding examples of your own, sample intros with and without motives can be found on the “Samples of Student Writing” handout on the following page.

Sample UWS Introductions with Motives

Midway through the *Simpsons'* fifth-season episode "Bart Gets an Elephant," the eponymous elephant abandons the Simpson home and rampages through Springfield. As Stampy the Elephant tastes freedom for the first time his immediate instinct is, interestingly enough, to visit the Republican National Convention, which has conveniently convened in Springfield. As Stampy thunders through the meeting to the applause of the delegates, he passes signs reading "we want what's worst for everyone" and "we're just evil." This sort of passing background joke appears frequently on *The Simpsons*, and a casual or inattentive viewer might take it as a partisan dig at the Republican Party. Irrelevant to the episode's plot or even the absurd spectacle of an elephant running through a Republican meeting, the signs might nevertheless signal that *The Simpsons* staff speaks from a liberal perspective. However, such a reading ignores Stampy's next stop. For, after being greeted as a hero by the "just evil" Republicans, Stampy visits the Democratic National Convention, which has convened next door. The Democrats boo and hiss at Stampy as he wanders through their meeting, but what deserves mention here are the placards he walks past: the slogans that unite Springfield's democrats are "we can't govern" and "we hate life and ourselves." Just as the Republicans' signs proclaim them everything their enemies say they are, the Democrats' banners do exactly the same. The political divisiveness here, rather than championing one set of beliefs or another, serves to critique both ends of the political spectrum equally and in the same way, thus carving out an apolitical position from which the show can speak. Indeed, the signs do more than that: by reducing both sides of American politics to absurd parodies, *The Simpsons* argues that the American political system has larger problems than one good party and one bad one. This sort of argument underlies much of the first seven years of *The Simpsons*, and it makes possible much of the variety and universality that so many praise about the show in its early years. *The Simpsons'* engagement of politics provides us a ready means of examining the show's unique satiric perspective in its so-called "golden age," and of demonstrating how the show has changed in more recent years.

Northrop Frye went to great lengths in defining satire in his 1944 essay "The Nature of Satire." Published in *The University of Toronto Quarterly*, the article divides satire into two categories: joyous denunciation and irony. Joyous denunciation is a clear condemnation that appeals to a shared moral vocabulary, while irony is more like "the poisoned rings of the Renaissance" (82), making attacks that don't mean what they say and sneakily abuse their targets unnoticed. Frye mentions that the satire of irony has come to the fore in the modern age, mostly because of the loss of an easily assumed shared system of moral values to which all can easily appeal. Twenty five years later, Kurt Vonnegut penned *Slaughterhouse-Five*, a classic anti-war novel that may fairly be described as satirical. When reading satire, it can sometimes help to compare an example of satire with a broader definition or theory, so as to bring added insight to a reading of it. If one performs this task with *Slaughterhouse-Five* and Frye's theory of satire, one discovers that Vonnegut's novel is mostly a satire of irony, but that it contains elements of joyous denunciation as well. However, despite these touches of joyous denunciation, Vonnegut has produced a classic example of Fryean irony.

Few readers of Jon Krakauer's *Into the Wild* can fail to notice how much of the book's small volume—about one third in total—is taken up by discussion seemingly irrelevant to its ostensible subject. For a book often praised for providing insight into the character and life of a specific individual, *Into the Wild* quite often breaks from that analysis to offer a quite varied selection of autobiographical material and historical discussion. Indeed, Krakauer himself seems all too aware of this when he justifies some of his digressions with the assertion that his biography is a “necessary” (3) bit of human interest that provides a valuable interpretive framework to make sense of the life and death of Chris McCandless. Indeed, Krakauer's life experiences do help to shed light on the argument of *Into the Wild*, although not perhaps in the manner Krakauer intends. For Krakauer's book is not in fact about Chris McCandless at all, which is why the narrative is content to leave his life a tangled mess of contradictions and lacunae. Instead, Krakauer uses McCandless's life and death as tools to justify the choices and attitudes that have shaped his own life. If he can successfully vindicate McCandless as a sane adult in full control of his actions, then through some transitive process he will prove himself one as well in light of the similarities the two men share. This is why Krakauer never bothers to notice how little insight he actually gains into his subject: he's too busy trying to make McCandless's life into a lens for his own, no matter what he has to ignore in the process.

There is an old wives' tale that laughter is the best medicine for any pain. History has proven this to be true with the creation of political cartoons, sketch comedy, and satirical newspapers. *(T)he Onion*, created in 1988 at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, is a source used by many Americans for a satirical view on domestic and foreign current events. However, the morning of September 11, 2001 changed the role of *the Onion* in more ways than one. Many writers argued that after the World Trade Center attack, irony had seen its final day in American culture. “For some 30 years—roughly as long as the Twin Towers were upright,” explains columnist Ron Rosenblatt, “nothing was to be believed or taken seriously” (1). With the pain of the attack so real and apparent, there seemed little need to mask the country's pain and anger through ironic jokes. And yet, after only a week-long hiatus, *the Onion* reappeared online with its September 26 edition—just as satirical as the September 5 edition. Many asked how the satirical newspaper could return and begin poking fun at the people who, a mere week before, had killed thousands of their own countrymen. But *the Onion* provided the country with a reason to laugh. Media took on a much more serious tone, including late-night sketch and talk shows. This new irony combined the anger and grief of the country with a few jokes that were necessary to begin the healing process. *The Onion* provided an outlet for many with its brave new use of satire immediately following the 9/11 attacks, allowing readers to begin the healing process sooner.

Motive Exercise #3 – Motivating With Analytical Questions (Kerry Walk, Princeton)

The following exercise works best if supplemented with the “Asking an Analytical Question” handout on the following page:

Ask students to generate 10 compelling questions about the text that they’re analyzing. Emphasize that the questions must be genuine, not rhetorical or didactic, asked for the answer’s sake. Assess a handful of questions in class: Do readers find some questions more compelling than others? Follow up by having students answer their most compelling question.

Asking an Analytical Question

An important step in writing academic essays is to ask a good *analytical question*, one that poses a challenging way to address the central text(s) you will write about. Establishing that question won't be your first step—you'll need to do some observing and annotating, and even some interpreting, as a way of developing the question itself. But focusing on what that question might be early in your analysis helps you approach your essay with something to explore, an idea to discover (that will inform your *thesis*) for both you and your readers.

Think of the question as something you're truly interested in exploring as you read, an exploration you want to guide your reader through, since not everyone reading the text will come away with the same impressions and interpretations you do. (One of the truisms of writing: if you're not discovering something in the writing of your essay, your readers probably aren't either.)

A good analytical question:

- (1) speaks to a genuine dilemma in the text. In other words, the question focuses on a real confusion, ambiguity or grey area of the text, about which readers will conceivably have different reactions, opinions, or interpretations.
- (2) yields an answer that is not obvious. In a question such as "Why did Hamlet leave Denmark?" there's nothing to explore; it's too specific and can be answered too easily.
- (3) suggests an answer complex enough to require a whole essay's worth of argument. If the question is too vague, it won't suggest a line of argument (e.g., "Why are there so many references to acting in the play?"). The question should elicit analysis and argument rather than summary or description.
- (4) can be answered by the text, rather than by generalizations or by copious external research (e.g., "Why did Shakespeare depict madness in the way that he did?").

Tips to keep in mind:

- "How" and "why" questions generally require more analysis than "who/what/when/where."
- Good analytical questions can highlight patterns/connections, or contradictions/dilemmas/ problems.
- Good analytical questions can also ask about some implications or consequences of your analysis.

Thus the question should be answerable, given the available evidence, but not immediately, and not in the same way by all readers. Your thesis should give at least a provisional answer to the question, an answer that needs to be defended and developed. Your goal is to help readers understand why this question is worth answering, why this feature of the text is problematic, and to send them back to the text with a new perspective or a different focus.

Motive Exercise #4 – Peer Review of Motive (Laura John)

The following assignment can be completed either in class or online in a LATTE forum. Obviously Laura asks her students to complete it online (which is how I use it as well). However, it could be easily implemented during the class in which drafts are due (the class before your peer review session):

This assignment asks you to identify the thesis and motive in another's work.

By 8pm Monday, please post the (working) introductory paragraph of your research paper to our discussion page. **By 8pm Tuesday**, you must respond to two entries listing the thesis and motive you find therein. Identify the “motivating move” (according to the right hand column of the same name on the handout I gave you) – if there is no motive, or if it is unclear, offer one.

You do not have to fully rewrite the introductory paragraphs of your peers – merely list the thesis and motive, note if either is unclear, and offer a suggestion for any non-existent motives.

Motive Exercise #5 – Keeping Motives “On Point” (Rachel Kappelle)

In the introduction to each episode of *On Point*, Tom Ashbrook provides a motivation for the discussion which follows.

1. I open my lesson on Motive by playing the class (via the computer) the intro to an episode (or two) which is relevant to my course's theme.
2. We discuss the techniques Ashbrook uses to catch his listeners' interests and encourage them to care about the topic at hand. I steer them towards our standard Motivating Moves.
3. After the discussion we examine the Motivating Moves handout.
4. I finish the lesson by asking them how they might frame their motives for their upcoming close reading essay.

The *On Point* archives can be found at: <http://www.onpointradio.org/shows/>

Motive Exercise #6 – Motive Fill-in-the-Blank (Ryan Wepler)

This exercise is similar to the “Thesis fill-in-the-Blank” exercise. However, because students typically struggle with motive, I usually use it later in the semester.

In preparation for this exercise students must to bring to class their intro paragraph with the motive statement removed (they should leave a large blank space where the motive was). I typically complete this exercise either during the class that rough drafts are due or the class before. The directions I give the class are as follows:

1. Pass your motive-less intro to someone who hasn’t read it already.
2. Recipients of motive-less intros, write a “T” next to the thesis statement.
3. Write a motive—as specific as possible—based upon what you see in your intro.
4. Pass the paragraph back to its original owner.
5. Freewriting (if time): Authors, look carefully at the motive that was proposed for you. Write on the sheet:
 - a. How does your peer’s motive to yours?
 - b. Why might he/she have proposed that motive?
 - c. Is it more specific than yours?
 - d. How could you make it—or yours—more specific?

Obviously, step 3 is the essential step for this exercise, as it gives students practice writing motives and feedback on their intros. You can alter or skip the other steps according to your needs and time constraints. This exercise also has the somewhat insidious benefit of forcing students to write initially write intros with motives so that they can remove them before they bring them to class.

Motive Exercise: Identify the Weakness

The following passages attempt to present a motive to the reader, but the motivation is weak. In the space below each entry, identify the weakness and discuss how you would correct it.

Jesse Bier explains in his book, *The Rise and Fall of American Humor*, that the crux of American humor is its ability to reveal the truth at any cost. Our humor readily attacks any subject, and does so with double entendres and quick wit. *The Devil's Dictionary*, by Ambrose Bierce, typifies the American style by mocking every respected idea and showing how people are not as infallible as they would like to believe. Bierce's writing suggests that he is particularly egotistical and patronizing, but he is merely pointing out that all people, no matter how selfless they seem, are actually just as self-absorbed.

[Ridicule] is the common theme in Ambrose Bierce's *The Devil's Dictionary* that squashes the American dream and lifestyle through satire and criticism. While the words that Bierce chooses seem unadorned and irrelevant, they each serve an intricate purpose in portraying the mockery he is determined to project.

America is a symbol of individual success. People strive to achieve the American Dream of living a wealthy, prosperous life. One way to achieve this Dream is by becoming a doctor or lawyer. Americans value these professionals very highly for their beneficial assistance to society. However, Ambrose Bierce sees doctors as a group of people who rejoice in other people's illness.

None of these [aforementioned theories of humor] is specific enough or even interesting enough to characterize American humor well, however. Jesse Bier contends that American humor begins first and foremost with the criticism of institutions and values which are exalted in society.

American humor has always thrived on satire, from the works of Mark Twain to *The Colbert Report*. Ambrose Bierce's *Devil's Dictionary* at first glance appears as a normal dictionary of jokes, but with thorough examination, these jokes are proven to be satirical and even (to a degree) malicious.

By applying the techniques of literary analysis, readers may find Bierce's poetry mere doggerel at the first reading, amusing ditties at the second, yet profound masterpieces at the third.

Ranking Motive

1. Catherine struggles to gain respect and legitimacy in mathematical culture, just as Shakespeare's sister, Judith, tries (and fails) to launch a career in the theatre. By reading *Proof* in the light of Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, we can learn about the timeless struggle women face for equality. **RANKING:**

2. On the surface, *Proof* promotes a feminist agenda, celebrating a woman's ability to succeed in a male-dominated field. At the same time, Auburn cannot resist painting his "genius" heroine as unfeminine and unstable. In the end, *Proof* seems divided between feminist sympathies and sexist fears of the intellectual woman. **RANKING:**

3. Like the authors Gilbert & Gubar describe, Catherine suffers from a "radical fear that she cannot create" (Gilbert & Gubar 49). One might not expect sexism to be a problem in 20th century America, but if we look closely, we can see that the heroine of *Proof* suffers from the anxiety of authorship. **RANKING:**

4. Throughout *Equus*, Dysart and Alan maintain a combative relationship, either by positioning themselves as adversaries in a mock game or by probing one another's most sensitive secrets. The relationship between doctor and patient reflects a much larger social dynamic in Shaffer's play, one that exists between husbands and wives, parents and children, gods and their followers. In *Equus*, affection goes hand in hand with alienation, and intimacy constantly threatens to devolve into violence. **RANKING:**

5. *Proof* presents its audience with an inconsistency or a contradiction: in some scenes, Catherine appears rational and high-functioning, while in others, she appears paranoid and helpless. Thus—like so many other elements in *Proof*—madness appears to be ambiguous and difficult to discern. **RANKING:**

6. Throughout Shaffer's play, Dysart remains on stage, observing, prompting, and at times participating in Alan's flashbacks. Dysart's role in these scenes seems negligible and (literally) marginal, but his constant presence hints at a crucial tension in *Equus*. Dysart's desperate need to witness Alan's passion suggests that he shapes, and perhaps distorts, his patient's memories. As audience members, we do not see Alan's true past and rarely hear his voice in an unmediated form; instead, we encounter a past that Dysart has reconstructed. **RANKING:**

Instructions:

- With a partner, match each one of these statements to one of Kerry Walk's "motivating moves."
- Rank these motives in terms of their potential: the best as #1, the second best as #2, and so forth.

Motives: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

Successful motives offer your audience something. They explain what your audience stands to gain by reading your paper, thereby establishing why your argument is important. Some things that good motives do:

- They ask a question that the thesis statement helps to answer. (Why does the text do these two contradictory things?)
- They articulate problems or tensions, which the thesis statement helps to solve.
- They shed light on the offbeat or the easily overlooked, explaining why and how the thesis is not obvious.
- They place a specific aspect of the text (a certain character, a certain dynamic between characters) in a larger context.

Unsuccessful motives feel manufactured or imposed on the paper. Some places where motives often go wrong:

- The author motivates his/her paper with a problem or "contradiction" that is actually self-evident ("At times, Catherine seems mad, but at *other* times, it seems as if she is sane. Thus, madness is indeterminate in *Proof*.")
- The author motivates his/her paper with a straw man argument, generating a tension that isn't real ("Some would say that women cannot be good mathematicians, but David Auburn says...")
- The author motivates his/her paper by promising to explain or elucidate something impossibly broad ("A close reading of *Proof* reveals the fundamental roots of sexism, once and for all....")
- The author does not motivate his/her paper! Instead, the thesis pops up in the introduction with no real context. ("Claire is the true madwoman of *Proof*." Interesting theory, but...tell us why we should care!)

Once again, Kerry Walk's eight motivating moves:

1. The truth isn't what one would expect, or what it might appear to be on first reading.
2. The knowledge on this topic has heretofore been limited.
3. There's a mystery or puzzle here that needs answering.
4. Published views of the matter conflict.
5. We can learn about a larger phenomenon by studying this smaller one.
6. This seemingly tangential or insignificant matter is actually important or interesting.
7. There's an inconsistency, contradiction, or tension here that needs explaining.
8. The standard opinion(s) need challenging or qualifying.

Identifying Motive in Real-World Writing

When I do this exercise I explain that a good thesis typically challenges, complicates or adds to a strand of conventional wisdom (the “conventional wisdom” is the motive). In addition to asking for a primary and secondary motivating moves, I ask students to identify the conventional thinking that the thesis pushes back against. For example, the first anecdote about Teresa Duncan challenges the conventional wisdom that happy couples in love don’t commit suicide. The second about law school complicates the conventional wisdom that as demand goes down (for lawyers), prices (in terms of tuition) should as well. The third anecdote about Amazon complicates the conventional wisdom that we (human beings) behave rationally—a key assumption in economics. And the last anecdote adds to the conventional wisdom of what comprises a fossil.

Note that there isn’t just one answer/correct motivating move for these different anecdotes. Your students will likely come up with a variety of answers, which is fine. It’s most important to get them to recognize the various moves writers make to hook their readers.

Instructions: First, identify the strand of conventional wisdom that the passage pushes back against. Then, match the passage to one or more of the “motivating moves.”

“When Theresa Duncan, 40, took her own life on July 10 (2007), followed a week later by her boyfriend, Jeremy Blake, 34, their friends were stunned and the press was fascinated: what had destroyed this glamorous couple, stars of New York’s multi-media art world, still madly in love after 12 years?...The Internet filled up with conjecture about government plots and murder. Something about the story seemed to capture the modern imagination, if only because no one knew exactly why two such accomplished and attractive people had chosen to make their exit.”

Nancy Jo Sales, “The Golden Suicides”
Vanity Fair, Volume 569, January 2008

Conventional wisdom:

Primary motivating move:

Secondary motivating move:

“Ten months after graduation, only 60% of the law school class of 2014 had found long-term jobs that required them to pass the bar exam. Even that improvement over the class of 2013 came with three asterisks: Last year, the American Bar Association changed the job-reporting rules to give law schools an extra month for the class of 2014 to find jobs; graduates employed in law-school funded positions count in the employment rate; and the number of jobs that require bar passage fell from 2013 to 2014. Amazingly (and perversely), law schools have been able to continue to raise tuition while producing nearly twice as many graduates as the job market has been able to absorb. How is this possible? Why hasn’t the market correct itself?

Steven J. Harper, “Too Many Law Students, Too Few Legal Jobs”
New York Times, August 25, 2015

Conventional wisdom:

Primary motivating move:

Secondary motivating move:

“A couple of months ago, I went on-line to order a book. The book had a list price of twenty-four dollars; Amazon was offering it for eighteen. I clicked to add it to my “shopping cart” and a message popped up on the screen. “Wait!” it admonished me. “Add \$7.00 to your order to qualify for FREE Super Saver Shipping!”...By the time I was done (shopping), I had saved...\$3.99 in shipping charges. Meanwhile, I had cost myself \$12.91. Why do people do things like this? From the perspective of neoclassical economics, self-punishing decisions are difficult to explain. Rational

calculators are supposed to consider their options, then pick the one that maximizes the benefit to them. Yet actual economic life, as opposed to theoretical versions, is full of miscalculations, from the gallon jar of mayonnaise purchased at spectacular savings to the billions of dollars Americans will spend this year to service their credit-card debt.”

Elizabeth Kolbert, “What Was I thinking?”

The New Yorker, February 25, 2008

Conventional wisdom:

Primary motivating move:

Secondary motivating move:

“Until a few years ago, I tended to think of fossils as bones and shells—the vestiges of animal skeletons. But all sorts of other things can leave fossils, too. Footprints are one. Feces, another. Impressions of skin and feathers. Leaves and pollen. Growth rings of trees. All of these open different windows onto the past; together, they help us construct a richer portrait of it than we could glean from skeletons by themselves. Widths of tree rings indicate rainfall, and thus, climate. Fossil leaves can show damage from the maraudings of ancient insects; analysis of leaf damage can thus illuminate the broader dynamics of ecosystems. Fossil feces (“coprolites”) reveal extinct diets; they can also reveal attributes of plants where actual plant fossils are missing.

Olivia Judson, “Bones Are Not the Only Fossils”

The New York Times, March 4, 2008

Conventional wisdom:

Primary motivating move:

Secondary motivating move:

Answer Key:

Instructions: match each of these passages to one or more of the “motivating moves.”

“When Theresa Duncan, 40, took her own life on July 10 (2007), followed a week later by her boyfriend, Jeremy Blake, 34, their friends were stunned and the press was fascinated: what had destroyed this glamorous couple, stars of New York’s multi-media art world, still madly in love after 12 years?...The Internet filled up with conjecture about government plots and murder. Something about the story seemed to capture the modern imagination, if only because no one knew exactly why two such accomplished and attractive people had chosen to make their exit.”

Nancy Jo Sales, “The Golden Suicides”
Vanity Fair, Volume 569, January 2008

Conventional wisdom: People in love don’t commit suicide.

Primary motivating move: *There’s a mystery or puzzle or question here that needs answering*

Secondary motivating move: *We can learn about a larger phenomenon by studying this smaller one.*

“Ten months after graduation, only 60% of the law school class of 2014 had found long-term jobs that required them to pass the bar exam. Even that improvement over the class of 2013 came with three asterisks: Last year, the American Bar Association changed the job-reporting rules to give law schools an extra month for the class of 2014 to find jobs; graduates employed in law-school funded positions count in the employment rate; and the number of jobs that require bar passage fell from 2013 to 2014. Amazingly (and perversely), law schools have been able to continue to raise tuition while producing nearly twice as many graduates as the job market has been able to absorb. How is this possible? Why hasn’t the market correct itself?

Steven J. Harper, “Too Many Law Students, Too Few Legal Jobs”
New York Times, August 25, 2015

Conventional wisdom: As demand for lawyers goes down, prices (tuition) should as well.

Primary motivating move: *There’s a mystery or puzzle or question here that needs answering*

Secondary motivating move: *There’s an inconsistency, contradiction, or tension here that needs explaining*

“Until a few years ago, I tended to think of fossils as bones and shells—the vestiges of animal skeletons. But all sorts of other things can leave fossils, too. Footprints are one. Feces, another. Impressions of skin and feathers. Leaves and pollen. Growth rings of trees. All of these open different windows onto the past; together, they help us construct a richer portrait of it than we could glean from skeletons by themselves. Widths of tree rings indicate rainfall, and thus, climate. Fossil leaves can show damage from the maraudings of ancient insects; analysis of leaf damage can

thus illuminate the broader dynamics of ecosystems. Fossil feces (“coprolites”) reveal extinct diets; they can also reveal attributes of plants where actual plant fossils are missing.

Olivia Judson, “Bones Are Not the Only Fossils”
The New York Times, March 4, 2008

Conventional wisdom: Fossils are only bones and shells.

Primary motivating move: *The truth isn’t what one would expect, or what it might appear to be on first reading*

Secondary motivating move: *The knowledge on the topic has heretofore been limited.*

“A couple of months ago, I went on-line to order a book. The book had a list price of twenty-four dollars; Amazon was offering it for eighteen. I clicked to add it to my “shopping cart” and a message popped up on the screen. “Wait!” it admonished me. “Add \$7.00 to your order to qualify for FREE Super Saver Shipping!” ...By the time I was done (shopping), I had saved...\$3.99 in shipping charges. Meanwhile, I had cost myself \$12.91. Why do people do things like this? From the perspective of neoclassical economics, self-punishing decisions are difficult to explain. Rational calculators are supposed to consider their options, then pick the one that maximizes the benefit to them. Yet actual economic life, as opposed to theoretical versions, is full of miscalculations, from the gallon jar of mayonnaise purchased at spectacular savings to the billions of dollars Americans will spend this year to service their credit-card debt.”

Elizabeth Kolbert, “What Was I thinking?”
The New Yorker, February 25, 2008

Conventional wisdom: Human beings behave rationally.

Primary motivating move: *There’s an inconsistency, contradiction, or tension here that needs explaining*

Secondary motivating move: *This seemingly tangential or insignificant matter is actually important or interesting*

Viable Motives for the Lens Essay

A) It seems as if CASE is arguing X, but, if examined in the context of LENS, something more complicated comes to light.

[CASE + basic analysis = uncomplicated reading of CASE

②

CASE + reading informed by LENS = complex reading of CASE]

B) It seems as if CASE and LENS perfectly coincide. However, if examined more closely, there are moments of tension or contradiction, leading to a more complicated reading of one or both.

[CASE + LENS + basic examination = basic connection between LENS & CASE

②

CASE + LENS + subtle examination = tension = complex reading of LENS/CASE/BOTH]

C) It seems as if CASE and LENS have nothing to do with one another. However, if examined closely, they speak to each other in unexpected ways, leading to a more complicated reading of one or both.

[LENS + CASE + basic examination = nonsense

②

LENS + CASE + subtle examination = unexpected connections = complex reading of
LENS/CASE/BOTH]

D) It seems as if LENS perfectly explains the workings of CASE. However, if examined more closely, CASE reveals that there are aspects of LENS that lack subtlety or require revision.

[LENS + CASE + surface-level examination = basic reading of CASE

②

CASE + LENS + in-depth examination = complex reading of LENS]

E) LENS seems totally accurate, but if these ideas are implemented in the context of CASE, they require complication or revision.

[LENS + general phenomena = LENS works

②

LENS + CASE = subtle reading of LENS]

Examples of Strong Motives

As an excellent example of American humor, Bierce's *Dictionary* exhibits the elements that Sculley Bradley defines in "Our Native Humor" as essential to the style, especially the element of exaggeration. Although Bierce has, as Bradley says the English call it, a "habit of telling a lie" (51), shown through his exaggeration of the wickedness of mankind as a whole, there is more than a small bit of truth in what Bierce is saying in his jokes.

The American dream that has been publicized and propagandized throughout our history is that honest, hard work leads to prosperity. Although Ambrose Bierce, in *The Devil's Dictionary*, redefines, literally, our views on the American dream, there is a broader concept to be learned from his satire. He ridicules authority and its prestige while also lauding and exulting the vulgar and immoral in an attempt to show that the dichotomy between right and wrong, good and evil, is not always easily discerned, but, rather, these two feuding elements are more closely tied than one would imagine.

Bierce wrote his satirical dictionary in a time when the feminist movement was just rising—when women were demanding equal rights and, in some cases, gaining prominent positions in society. Exactly as Bier formulates, the men who felt their grip on women slip away, scoffed at this in an effort to diminish the movement every step of the way. Even though it may seem that Bierce joins in on the bashing in *The Devil's Dictionary*, he is actually exploiting the American man's anxiety in his comic writing.

Ambrose Bierce's *The Devil's Dictionary* lays out a detailed picture of the American social structures of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The entries outline the author's cynicism and animosity towards the standards of the average American. For instance, Bierce's definition of "gambler" is simply "a man" (93). Bierce's cynicism, however, should not overshadow the underlying motive to eradicate the glaring problems that Bierce saw and addressed in his entries.

After a few minutes of reading, the reader starts to become familiar with the character of the cynical lexicographer, and notices that there are a few subjects that the lexicographer seems particularly fixated on—such as, women, theft, and religion—which he frequently revisits to further express his frustrations with them. Although one might see all of the entries in *The Devil's Dictionary* as the commentary of Bierce himself rather than the commentary of a character, Bierce's message can be fully understood only by understanding this character.

Evidence & Analysis

Evidence & Analysis Exercise #1 – Counterargument Exercise (Bridget Chalk)

Step 1: Ask students to identify their thesis (or claim) and write it on a separate piece of paper. I do this either before their rough draft is due or during the revision period.

Step 2: Have students come up with a potential counterargument (note: if you can't come up with a counterargument, your thesis is too simple!).

Step 3: Have students write down the counterargument and develop it through a 5 minute freewrite (if in class) or a page (if for homework). The point of this is to move students away from making weak or illegitimate counterarguments for the sole purpose of discrediting them.

Step 4: Ask students to return to their original argument and attempt to answer the counterarguments raised by the freewrite. If the counterarguments are too convincing, it might be time to evolve the original thesis. If the counterarguments are answerable, you might use them as a basis for your motive.

Step 5. How to integrate counterargument effectively into paper: generate list of “hedging” (ex. perhaps, seems, appears) and “argumentative words” on board together.

Estimated time: 15 minutes

Evidence & Analysis Exercise #2 – Highlighting Argument (Ryan Wepler)

This exercise must be used after students have turned in rough drafts. It works well when paired with a peer review session. In preparation for this class, you will need to distribute a strong sample student essay or use one from *Write Now!*. Ask students to bring to class both the sample student essay and one of their peers' essays (or their own) highlighted in the following way:

Pink = Transitions

Blue = Claim

Yellow = Evidence (Summary/Paraphrase/Quotation)

Green = Analysis

In class, discuss the proportion and structure of claims, evidence, analysis, and transitions in the sample essay (5-7 minutes). Then have students pass the essays back to their original authors, and ask them to write for six to eight minutes comparing the structure of their own writing to that of the sample essay. Students should also discuss how their comparison of the two essays (the sample and their own) affects their understanding of their own writing and what strategies they will consider for revision. After students have finished writing, spend a few minutes discussing the ideas they generated in the writing exercise. This exercise should take about 20 minutes.

Variation #1 – Highlighting on the paragraph level: A possible variation is to use this exercise on the paragraph level. This can be done purely as an in class exercise. Have students highlight and compare their introduction, conclusion, or one body paragraph to a strongly written sample. To make the exercise as effective as possible, you may need to change the structural components that the highlighting colors correspond to.

I typically use this exercise for each essay (though I occasionally vary what I ask my students to highlight). I typically ask students to highlight *both* the *Write Now!* essay and one of the essays they were assigned to peer review.

Below is a sample version of this assignment that I handed out for my lens essay:

Highlighting Argument

When reading Alex Trott's essay "Confessions of a 40 Year Old Virgin: Foucault's Science of Sex in Modern Film" in *Write Now!* for class on Thursday, please highlight it in the following way (using the highlighters you purchased from the bookstore).

Orange = Claim

Yellow = Evidence (Summary/Paraphrase/Quotation)

Green = Analysis

Pink = Transitions

While completing the highlighting exercise, consider the ways in which the order and distribution of the argumentative parts of Trott's lens essay differ from those of Shilpa Makunda's close reading of Shakespeare's "Sonnet 20."

Evidence & Analysis Exercise #3 – Syllogisms (Ryan Wepler)

Teach students how to diagram arguments using syllogisms. The classic example is:

Major premise:	All men are mortal	A = B
Minor premise:	Socrates is a man	C = A
Conclusion:	Socrates is mortal	C = B

Explain this example, then diagram two additional examples using paragraphs taken from student essays: one that you model by yourself and one that you ask students to model for you. Once students have a basic understanding of how to turn prose arguments into syllogisms, ask them to diagram the major arguments of their own essays as a series of syllogisms. If this is too complex, ask them to diagram one part of their argument as a syllogism.

The rules of validity are a bit too complex to make a big deal of in class. The goal of this exercise is to get students to break the arguments of their essays down to the bare bones, and to give them a different perspective on argumentation. Once students have stated what they take to be the building blocks of their essays, you can extend this exercise to work on uncovering the assumptions behind their claims, the evidence they use to defend them, and analyzing their evidence and assumptions.

Evidence & Analysis Exercise #4 – Three Exercises for Considering Counterarguments

Objectives: to get students to strengthen their claims by addressing potential counterarguments; to help students locate and integrate productive counterarguments.

Here are ideas for teaching counterargument that your students can accomplish on their own, in small groups or as a whole class.

Note: Any of these exercises should be paired with a conversation about when and why to include counterarguments in their essays. Students are often reluctant to reveal the weaknesses of their own arguments. A discussion of where in the paper to place counterarguments and how to use them productively will help students apply these exercises to their own writing.

Version 1. On their own

This exercise can be done as homework or in class. In class it should only take about 15-20 minutes and can either be part of a larger peer review workshop or a discussion of counterargument. You might pair it with reading sample student essays from Write Now as models. This exercise can build on previous work you've already done on developing a working thesis or on claims and evidence.

Step 1: Ask students to identify their thesis (or claim) and write it on a separate piece of paper.

Step 2: Have students come up with a potential counterargument (note: if you can't come up with a counterargument, your thesis is too simple!).

Step 3: Have students write down the counterargument and develop it through a 5 minute freewrite (if in class) or a page (if for homework). The point of this is to move students away from making weak or illegitimate counterarguments for the sole purpose of discrediting them.

Step 4: Ask students to return to their original argument and attempt to answer the counterarguments raised by the freewrite. If the counterarguments are too convincing, it might be time to evolve the original thesis. If the counterarguments are answerable, you might use them as a basis for your motive.

Version 2: In small groups

This exercise is very similar to the first, except that it asks one student to develop a counterargument for another. This takes up more class time than Version 1 (30 minutes if you focus on the thesis, longer if you ask students to read through the whole paper), but can also result in stronger arguments.

Usually by this point in the semester I've given my students a handout from Peter Elbow and Pat Belanoff that outlines different ways of responding to one another's writing (attached). For this exercise, we use "Believing and Doubting."

Step 1: Ask students to get into pairs and exchange papers.

Step 2: Either ask students to complete Version 1 for each other's papers or ask them to read through each other's papers doubting every claim their partner makes. They should write down every argument they can make against their partner.

Step 3: After students have shared the counterarguments they've developed for each other's essays, they should read through again. This time ask them to believe everything their partner has written and to help them make those arguments even stronger. [Note: you don't want the two partners to get into an argument, so have the same student both doubt and believe. Be sure to stress that it doesn't matter whether they actually believe or doubt each other's arguments; we're role-playing to help strengthen each other's work.]

Step 4: Ask students to use this exercise to determine whether their thesis needs to evolve, to help establish a motive, and to strengthen their arguments.

Version 3: As a whole class

I've had great success using forced debate in my classes. Forced debate almost always produces a lively discussion with near total participation. It works best if you set up ground rules at the outset about how and when students can contribute to the debate. If you plan it carefully, you should just be able to sit back in the corner and watch the debate take place. Minimal moderation is ideal.

Step 1: Find something provocative in the material you're covering. Sometimes a heated topic can be drawn from the previous discussion (a good argument that got cut short?). Present 2 possible, oppositional approaches to the material.

Step 2: Divide the class in half down the middle. Assign each group a position. The division should be arbitrary so that some people will be arguing for their own view and others will have to argue against their own view.

Step 3: Give the two groups 5-10 minutes to develop their arguments and compile evidence. Just like any other class discussion, they should pull specific examples and quotes from the readings or materials under discussion.

Step 4: Ask the two groups to engage in a debate. This exercise dramatizes the excitement of a truly debateable argument.

Alternative: as a class, have students develop counterarguments for one of the essays you're reading in class. As a preliminary step before any of these exercises, this would get students used to coming up with counterarguments before applying the idea to their own writing.

Evidence & Analysis Exercise #5 – Reading at the Word Level (Ryan Wepler)

Ask students to come to class having identified a passage in the text you are reading—somewhere between five lines and a paragraph long—that they deem interesting, intriguing, or important. You may also have them choose such a passage during class. Ask your students to write for four minutes—as expansively as they are able—about the one word (or phrase) that they deem most essential to the meaning of that passage. Students should primarily seek to demonstrate:

1. how that word (or phrase) lends meaning to the larger passage and
2. to articulate what those meanings are.

Follow the writing exercise with a 10-15 minute discussion of students' findings that models different approaches to the exercise and places these approaches in dialogue. This exercise gives students practice with two essential close reading skills: analyzing at the word level of a text and writing thoroughly about those small details.

Variation #1 – Courses focusing on visual culture can easily adapt this exercise for their close reading assignments. Simply replace the prose text with a piece of visual culture and ask students to write about the visual detail that contributes most meaningfully to the entire work (or some portion of it).

Evidence & Analysis Exercise #6 – Synthesizing Local Readings

(Ryan Wepler)

This exercise requires each student to have prepared a brief close reading of a passage from a larger work in advance. You can generate these local readings in pre-draft assignments, the “Reading at the Word Level” exercise, online forum postings, &c. The steps for completing the exercise are as follows:

1. Collect a number of students’ local readings in one place, either on the board or on a handout you have prepared in advance.
2. Ask students to read over the collection of different local readings and to write for 5-6 minutes about common themes or ideas they notice in them.
3. Have students to break into groups of 3 or 4. Assign the groups to look for commonalities in the themes they identified and to turn those common ideas into a thesis statement for a paper they might write using this evidence. This should take 8-10 minutes.
4. Call on each group to share their thesis—write them on the board—and discuss how they derived their more comprehensive idea from the set of local reading they began with. A comprehensive discussion of each group’s thesis will likely take 20-25 minutes. It is possible to curtail this by synthesizing a few of the similar theses in to one that serves as the model for discussion.
5. [optional] After a thesis is written on the board, you might also work on revising it for stronger articulation or greater complexity.

This exercise combines the three primary components of any writing seminar: in class writing, group work, and class discussion. In addition, it models the thought process by which one arrives at a successful thesis by looking closely at the available evidence and allows the instructor to guide and intervene in this complex process

Evidence & Analysis Exercise #7 – Meta-Close Reading (Ryan Wepler)

Students often do not understand that writing of the type you are asking them to produce is all around them, making their assignments feel more like isolated exercises than applicable skills. Nearly any article that you read in your course will involve moments of close reading. In order to both motivate and educate students about the process of close reading, ask them to identify moments of close reading in one of the source texts for your course. The preparation for this exercise can be completed outside of class or during a class session (possibly as an in class writing assignment). Discuss students' findings, focusing especially on analyzing the techniques the author of the source text used to produce his or her close readings. In addition to identifying specific approaches to close reading, this exercise demonstrates for students how careful reading can also be a means of improving their writing.

Evidence & Analysis Exercise #8 – Close Reading in Write Now! (Ryan Wepler)

Although it seems obvious to us, students often have a difficult time internalizing that the essays in *Write Now!* are intended to model the skills after which we would like them to pattern their own writing. To reinforce this, it helps to isolate specific elements of the essays rather than introducing them as broad examples. This exercise allows you to get specific about what makes for good (and bad) close reading. Students should come to class having read one of the close reading essays in *Write Now!* (assigned by you):

1. Ask students to identify the strongest moment of close reading in the essay (can be completed outside of class).
2. Ask students to share their answers. Choose the two moments that get the most votes and discuss what components make this a particularly effective instance of close reading.
3. Turn the identification of specific strengths in your chosen essay into a few general guidelines for close reading that you write on the board.
4. Ask students to identify the weakest moment of close reading in the essay (can be completed outside of class).
5. Ask students to share their answers. Choose the moment that gets the most votes and revise (as best you can) using the guidelines you have written on the board in step 3 (can be completed as group work).

If completed thoroughly, this exercise will take at least 30 minutes and may consume the entire class if you work with a number of examples. To save time you can skip steps 4 and 5.

Evidence & Analysis #9 – Sample Lens Essay Review (Rachel Kappelle)

The handout for this exercise will have to be readapted to the essays in each issue of *Write Now!* But it provides an excellent model for a productive class early in the unit that helps students understand the use of evidence and analysis in the lens essay.

When my students come to class having read a sample *Write Now!* Lens Essay, I break them into six groups and give them the following instructions. This exercise forces them to analyze details in the sample essay and shows them the elements of the lens essay I will weigh the most heavily.

Sample Lens Essay Review

Group 1 and 4:

Prepare a maximum 6 sentence-long assessment of the essay's thesis and motive. Are they clear? Specific enough? Is the thesis arguable? Does the motive provide a justification for the paper's existence and give a sense of what is at stake?

* On a scale of 1-5, with 5 being a high score and 1 being a low score, how would you rate the paper in this respect?

Group 2 and 5:

Prepare a maximum 6 sentence-long assessment of the links the essay makes between lens and film. Does the writer make a connection between Foucault and the film in most paragraphs? When the writer uses examples from the film to illustrate Foucault's concepts does the writer explain the connection explicitly, instead of making the reader figure it out for him/herself?

* On a scale of 1-5, with 5 being a high score and 1 being a low score, how would you rate the paper in this respect?

Group 3 and 6:

Prepare a maximum 6 sentence-long assessment of the essay's quotation use. When the writer uses quotations, are they integrated smoothly and grammatically? Are they introduced and contextualized before they are presented? Does the writer analyze them thoroughly afterwards?

* On a scale of 1-5, with 5 being a high score and 1 being a low score, how would you rate the paper in this respect?

When you are finished, each group will present its report. If different groups disagree with each other in their assessments, we will discuss the issue as a class.

Evidence & Analysis Exercise #10 – Lens Analysis of an Email (Njelle Hamilton)

I do this exercise the first day I introduce the lens essay. After explaining briefly what a lens is, we watch a clip from the TV series *Boston Public* (Season 3 Episode 10 / Chapter 54) in which the teacher, Mr. Flynn, has his interpretation of Dickinson's "The Sea" challenged by a parent who claims to have been a family friend of the poet's. Mr. Flynn then takes the parent's claims about Dickinson's psyche as a lens to reread the poem, which opens up whole new interpretations.

The following exercise has the students applying the lens after Mr. Flynn's model.

Instructions:

1. Here is an email that you've just received from a close friend of yours. Perform a close reading analysis and offer an interpretation of the writer's feelings and motives.

"Yesterday I was walking home in the rain and I stepped into a puddle of dark murky water and it messed up my lovely yellow dress and my shoes were all wet. I was so upset with the stupid rain that kept on coming down. Running all over the street, drowning everything, just ugly gray clouds wherever you looked."

2. Now, what if you learned from another close friend after reading this email that the writer was depressed. How would your interpretation of the email change? What words, phrases, ideas, would offer new meaning to you? What caused these words to change?

After they report on their observations, we use the exercise to clarify our definition of "lens" and "case" for the purposes of the academic essay before looking at the assignment sequence.

Close Reading an Email

Dear Bob,

Good to see you. Thanks for going with me to dinner and the movies. It was interesting overall to hear about your researched interests. I'm impressed with the tremendous amount of time you spend in the lab and at the library. You are clearly very devoted to and diligent about your work.

But, unfortunately I won't be able to join you for the Celtics game next week due to a yearly commitment. Good luck with your new experiments. I hope they go well, especially since they mean so much to you.

Best,
Carol

Things to consider as you decode this email:

1. What is its structure? Formal, informal, a mix?
2. What is the tone?
3. What kind of unspoken meaning can you infer from the sentences? How do you know whether or not a second date is likely to occur?
4. Are there double entendres?
5. What is the hidden message? (Hint: look for an acrostic)

Close Reading an Email Answers

Dear Bob, (READS LIKE A BUSINESS LETTER AND NOT OF SOMEONE WHO IS ROMANTICALLY INTERESTED)

Good to see you. Thanks for going with me to dinner and the movies. (THE GUY WAS TOO CHEAP TO PAY!) It was interesting overall to hear about your research interests. (WRITTEN IN PASSIVE VOICE) I'm impressed with the tremendous (DOUBLE ENTENDRE) amount of time you spend in the lab and at the library. (CLEARLY, THE GUY SPENT THE ENTIRE NIGHT TALKING ABOUT HIMSELF AND HAS NO LIFE). You are clearly very devoted to and diligent about your work. (SEEMS LIKE A COMPLIMENT BUT REALLY ISN'T—A CASE WHERE THE WORDS DON'T MATCH UP TO THEIR OSTENSIBLE MEANING).

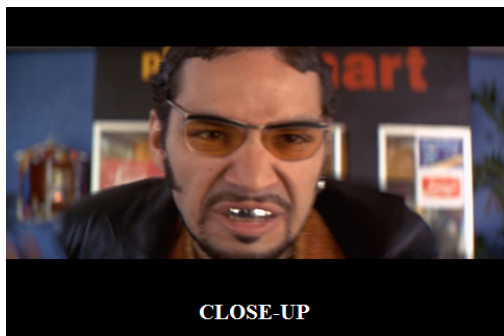
But, unfortunately I won't be able to join you for the Celtics game next week due to a yearly commitment. (VAGUE ANSWER INDICATES SHE JUST DOESN'T WANT TO GO) Good luck with your new experiments. I hope they go well, especially since they mean so much to you. (LEAVES NO ROOM FOR HIM TO ISSUE A FUTURE INVITATION AND PROVIDES FURTHER PROOF THAT HE TALKED ABOUT HIMSELF INCESSANTLY)

Best (COMPLETELY IMPERSONAL),
Carol

Teaching Film Terms (Hanh Bui):

The goal of this exercise is threefold: introduce film terms, practice close-reading a film, and discuss the assigned movie. As a class we've already watched some clips. So when introducing film terms I find it easier and more efficient to work with screenshots instead of video. There are websites that offer screenshots (aka screen grabs or stills) of entire films, so I put together a slide presentation of key terms with accompanying shots from the movie. When students see examples of low and high angle shots on the screen, it becomes easier for them to appreciate how the former can emphasize the subject's superior power and authority, while the latter can emphasize the subject's vulnerability. In some instances I have two images of the same term to show how the effect on the viewer is not one-size-fits-all. I also hand out a sheet of basic and advanced film terms (not all of which are included in the slide presentation) for them to have during this exercise. For a 50-minute class I prepare 20 slides of 15 terms, but I don't spend equal amounts of time discussing each slide and will inevitably just flip through the last 5 images or so.

images from : <http://screenmusings.org/movie/dvd/Romeo-and-Juliet/>



Thinking Critically About Film Adaptations (Hanh Bui)

The objective of this exercise is to get students thinking about directorial decisions when it comes to reimagining a literary text for the big screen. It's basically a worksheet version of Margaret Carkeet's exercise, "Close Reading Film." I give this exercise after the class has discussed both the literary text and the film, and once students have some familiarity with cinematic terms. I start by showing a clip from the movie, then I ask students to complete the worksheet in small groups. There are too many filmic elements for them to discuss and fill out the entire sheet, so I ask groups to pick 2 or 3 features, then move on and discuss the questions on the bottom. I save the last 10 minutes of class to reconvene and discuss students' findings all together. When it comes time to writing their papers on the film adaptation, I encourage students to refer back to this sheet to organize their evidence and analyses.

“The study of literature casts light on the meanings in the film,
and the study of the film can illuminate the full value of the literature.”
–Ronald Perrier, *From Fiction to Film*

Column 1: formal features of the film –
from the different or literary text?

Column 2: *the effect* of the directorial same
Decision on the telling of the story – new insights?

Setting (location)	
Characters (who is in the scene, casting)	
Storyline/Plot events	
Script (who says what, dialogue, no dialogue)	
Mis-en-scène (sets, lighting, props, costumes)	
Camera work (shots, angles, focus, point of view)	
Editing (cuts, transitions, montage, continuity)	
Sound (voiceover, music, special effects, background noises)	

Additional questions to consider:

What is the overall mood of the film scene? Does it match your reading of the literary text?

What is the scene's most significant or potentially controversial departure from the literary text?

What subtexts (underlying themes or meaning) are at work in this scene? Are they available in the literary text?

Does the film offer any historical/political/cultural contexts that are different from or in addition to the literary text?

Overall, does the film convey what you consider to be the literary text's core meaning? In other words, is the film a "strict" or "loose" interpretation of the text?

Claim, Evidence, and Analysis in Tabloids: What Not to Do

In partners, read one of the example stories pulled from recent tabloids. While reading, note how the authors structure their arguments: Draw an *arrow* to point to the orienting information, *circle* the evidence, *underline* the analysis. Can you easily identify the orienting information, evidence, and analysis? Then discuss the following with your partner: (1) What is the author's claim? Is the author's argument clear and convincing? Why or why not? (2) Is the evidence specific? Do you think the evidence is high quality? (3) What is the proportion of evidence to analysis? How could it be improved? (4) Does the analysis match the evidence? Support the author's claim?

Christian Bale apologizing for bringing world a week's worth of entertainment

Christian Bale called into Kevin and Bean on KROQ this morning to apologize for a leaked audio tape of him going crazy on the set of *Terminator Salvation*. According to E! News:

"It's been a miserable week for me," Bale told hosts Kevin Ryder and Gene "Bean" Baxter. "Listen, I know I have a potty mouth; everybody knows this now. The thing that I really want to stress is I have no confusion whatsoever. I was out of order beyond belief. I was way out of order. I acted like a punk. I regret that. There is nobody that has heard that tape that's been hit harder by it than me. I make no excuses for it. It is unexcusable. I hope that that is absolutely clear."

As for what brought on the much-played rant, Bale said that the day's shooting was particularly intense and that "I put so much into what I do and care so much about it and sometimes the enthusiasm just goes awry. I'm embarrassed by it. I ask everybody to sit down and ask themselves, have they ever had a bad day and have they ever lost their temper and really regretted it immensely." Not that he doesn't understand the public's insatiable desire to hear—and mock and remix—the audio.

"Feel free to make fun of me at my expense; I deserve it completely."

Christian also says the matter was resolved almost immediately after the incident. As for any residual hard feelings between Bale and the object of his on-set rant, the actor said it ceased being an issue shortly after the outburst. "We have resolved this completely...I have no intention of getting anyone fired. There is no problem whatsoever."

And Christian Bale is right, there's no longer a problem between him and Shane Hurlbert—because dead men can't start anything. **NOTE:** I have absolutely no facts to back that up, so it must be true.

(www.thesuperficial.com, February 6, 2009)

Kate Hudson & Owen Wilson are a Couple—Again!

Hollywood's on-again, off-again couple—Kate Hudson and Owen Wilson—are on yet again. "They're back together," a source tells PEOPLE of the pair, who spent all of Sunday together at Wilson's Malibu home. Also there: Hudson's 5-year-old son Ryder.

Hudson, 29, and Wilson, 40, were most recently linked in Feb. 2008, where they appeared cozy at the Academy Awards last year. The two continued to hang out for several months—even celebrating Hudson's birthday in Miami—before breaking up again in May 2008.

(www.people.com, February 9, 2009)

Linking Claims with Evidence

On first glance, the following claims and their corresponding evidence may seem to need no explanation, but evidence rarely can speak for itself. The point of contact between a claim and a piece of evidence is an important one. Good writing never leaves this point of contact empty—on the contrary, a good writer will examine the exact way in which a piece of evidence works to support a claim. **The relationship between a claim and its evidence must always be made explicit.** Ask yourself the following questions:

- 1) What do you take the details of the evidence to mean, specifically?
- 2) How does the evidence support your claim?
- 3) How does the evidence complicate your claim?

Directions: In pairs, write a paragraph that exhaustively links the following evidences with the corresponding claims. Be sure to use both the claim and the evidence in your paragraph. Use the above questions to guide you.

Example:

Claim: People prefer to read their news online rather than in print.

Evidence: *The New York Times* reports that paper subscriptions are down, while electronic subscriptions are up.

Before the invention of the internet, *The New York Times* relied exclusively on paper subscriptions for its customers simply because there was no other option. The influence of the internet has provided readers with an alternative way to read the news. This electronic alternative succeeds in ways that paper news did not. Unlike traditional newspapers, electronic news can be accessed anywhere, it is not bulky, and it is easily searchable. The convenience of electronic news is reflected in data from *The New York Times*, which reports that paper subscriptions are down, while electronic subscriptions are up. It appears from this data that readers of *The New York Times* who otherwise are committed to the newspapers are not leaving their subscriptions altogether, but rather simply changing their method of access from print to electronic. This data can be taken as representative of the newspaper culture in the United States as a whole because it is the most widely read, widely distributed newspaper in the country. The *Times* data shows that, given an option more convenient than the traditional method of news access, people prefer to read their news online rather than in print.

~~~ONE~~~

Claim: America is less sexist place now than it was in the past.

Evidence: The Republican Party nominated a woman to be its vice presidential candidate.

~~~TWO~~~

Claim: Thalia presents herself as stronger than the men in her video "Amor a la Mexicana."

Evidence: She is seen beating a man at arm wrestling.

~~~THREE~~~

Claim: Classical music is no longer relevant in society.

Evidence: Most people would rather attend a pop concert than a classical concert.

~~~FOUR~~~

Claim: Brandeis University is an excellent school.

Evidence: *US News and World Report* ranked Brandeis #31 on its list "National University Rankings."

~~~FIVE~~~

Claim: Thalia is confused in her song "Amor a la Mexicana."

Evidence: First she says she wants it smooth, then she says she wants it rough.

~~~SIX~~~

Claim: Gangs are ruining Sacramento.

Evidence: Gang-related deaths are on the rise in Sacramento.

~~~SEVEN~~~

Claim: High gas prices are changing people's lives.

Evidence: Ridership in public transportation has increased in the last year.

~~~EIGHT~~~

Claim: Produce production should be heavily regulated by the health department.

Evidence: In the last few years, there have been salmonella outbreaks that have affected the spinach, tomato, and jalapeno crops.

Analysis Exercise: Summarize the Quote

Below are examples of quotations followed by weak or insufficient summary. In the blank spaces below, revise these excerpts by writing new sentences to follow the quotations. Your revised sentences should adequately summarize the preceding quotation, clearly establishing its meaning in a way that will serve as a foundation for further analysis.

The word “admiration” . . . is defined by Bierce as a “polite recognition of another’s resemblance to ourselves” (12). Here Bierce takes the personal nature of admiration for another and exemplifies its darker side, a side that abuses polite civility purely for additional self-advancement.

The hypocrisy of man, the individual, is once again condoned in Bierce’s definition of charity: “An amiable quality of the heart which moves us to condone in others the sins and vices to which our selves are addicted” (34). This hypocrisy is a catch-22 that has left America in her state of disarray.

Bierce defines “freedom” as “Exemption from the stress of authority in a beggarly half dozen of restraint’s infinite multitude of methods. A political condition that every nation supposes itself to enjoy in virtual monopoly. Liberty. The distinction between freedom and liberty is not accurately known; naturalists have never been able to find a living specimen of either” (87). Freedom is the pillar of American society, without which we wouldn’t have any of the luxuries we’re accustomed to.

Working with Quotations

Quotations all require three components—lead-in, citation, and analysis—to be most effective.

- **Lead-in.** The lead-in prepares your the reader for the source material you are about to reproduce. Give the author's full name in your first quotation, with the exception of famous authors (i.e., Shakespeare, Hemmingway, Foucault) whose last name will suffice. After that, use the last name only. When necessary, give background to your quotations to help orient your reader. Fit quotations into your sentence's grammatical structure by
 - o changing your sentence structure to fit the quotation,
 - o using only part of the quotation,
 - o deleting words that impede the grammar with ellipses, or
 - o adding words to aid the grammar with square brackets.

Finally, identify and introduce quotations smoothly, using one of the following methods:

- o *Introduction and colon:* In fact, it is this question of mercy that Claudius immediately seizes upon: "Where to serves mercy / But to confront the visage of offence?" (III.iii.46-47).
 - o *Introductory phrase:* According to Freud, Hamlet is unable to "take vengeance on the man who did away with his father..." (qtd. in Jorgens 213).
 - o *Subordination using that:* The plan proves Hamlet's belief that "guilty creatures sitting at a play... [sometimes proclaim] their malefactions" (II.ii.546, 549).
 - o *Interrupted quotation* (less common): "What would he do," Hamlet wonders, "Had he the motive and the cue for passion / That I have?" (II.ii.516-18).
- **Citation.** Punctuate your citations correctly, and use proper MLA in-text citation format. Refer to *Rules for Writers* §54, p. 413ff., for format guidelines.
 - **Analysis.** The distinction between evidence and analysis we made for Essay 1 carries over into this context, as well. Here, the citation is your evidence; you need to provide the analysis. A good rule of thumb: however long your citation is, your analysis should be *at least one and a half times* that length.

Sample Paraphrase

Original Quote

Each person, it seems, loves what is good for him, and while what is good is unqualifiedly worthy of love, what is worthy of love for each individual is what is good for him. In fact, each person loves not what is good for him, but what seems good; this, however, will make no difference, since we shall say that this is what seems worthy of love.

-Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*

Use of Quote in Paraphrase

Most people hold conflicting opinions about love. They (cynically) believe that people actually love only what benefits them, while their ideals tell them that people should only love good things (which may not have a particular benefit to anybody). Aristotle argues that this common opinion is incorrect on two points. 1) The above cynic mistakes what is actually good for someone with what that person may only believe to be good for her-self (and thus might be wrong about what is good for her). 2) The above cynic makes a mistake about what “the good” is; Aristotle argues that “the good” is not something that can be known independent of a context or application. Therefore, we don’t say: “Apples are good” (unless we are expressing a preference for apples, and then we actually are meaning “I like apples.”) But rather, we say: “Apples are good *for you*.” ...or, good for *some purpose of yours*.

Notes to myself

This is a critical passage to understand Aristotle’s take on “the good” as well as understanding his conception of love.

Does this conception of love imply that it is necessarily egoistic? That we can never love something without reference to ourselves?

Close Reading: What to Read For

Close reading is a technique used in the understanding of texts that places primary importance upon close scrutiny of the text itself, making sense of a text by paying extremely careful attention to its form, diction, progression, and voice. The language of a given text expresses a great deal of information, not only in the literal expression of the words on the page but also by the manner in which the words are arranged, the ordering of points, and the choice of words and phrases with particular connotations or associations. When engaging in close reading it is imperative that you read with pen in hand, making careful note of everything that strikes you as significant, arresting, intriguing, or odd. Only once we have a complete understanding of how a text operates on a sentence level can we responsibly begin to make broader claims about its larger themes or methods. As you know, this is particularly true of understanding satire. Here is a basic list of some elements in a text that a good close reading should pay attention to:

- *Diction* – The specific word choice a writer makes can communicate quite a bit. Since the English language has a large vocabulary, we can usually choose from among several words that have the same basic meaning (elderly, aged, and old for example). But notice that very few synonyms have exactly the same shade of meaning: one can be formal, while another is more euphemistic, familiar, sophisticated, or judgmental. Diction can go a long way toward creating a particular tone, and is closely related to the notion of a piece's *speaker*.
- *Speaker* – Who is doing the talking in a particular text? What is his or her attitude toward the subject discussed? How can you tell? What do we learn about the speaker as the piece progresses? Is it more than she or he might seem to intend? Can you tell how reliable or unreliable the speaker's account is? Every text has a speaker, and it can be very useful to keep careful track of what that speaker is like. Some speakers, like the one who tells the *Iliad*, aren't present enough to inform much of a reading, but some speakers are absolutely essential to their respective texts, especially in works of satire.
- *Structure* – How do the ideas and themes of a text present themselves as the narrative unfolds? Are there any sudden changes or complications as new ideas appear? Are there any early hints that suggest a significant complication is coming (are you taken by surprise when *A Modest Proposal* suggests that year-old children are nutritious)? Taking careful note of how a piece unfolds is of great use in understanding how it works: sudden shifts have serious implications for what a text means, as do those that have been suggested beforehand.
- *Irony* – Related to structure, this is likely to be very important to any discussion of satire: where do you see some kind of tension in a text, between what is being said and what seems to be meant or between what happens and what you suspect might happen? How do you know how to take such things? Satirists often use some kind of underlying tension to let you know what their actual rhetorical aims are and what the object of their criticism is, and finding specific sites where that tension becomes apparent is essential.
- *Figurative language and rhetorical devices* – Pay attention to any similes, metaphors, symbols, allusions, or otherwise intriguing images. Do any recur, or do any share certain qualities? Do they express a common attitude? How do they work with other aspects of the text to make meaning?

Some successful close reading techniques (Cory Nelson)

- Write specific topic sentences that describe some aspect of the text. Rather than using your topic sentences to discuss the theme of the play, try crafting topic sentences that zoom in on the particulars of a scene: its vocabulary, its mood, its imagery. One difference between a topic sentence such as “Dysart expresses frustration in this scene” and “Dysart expresses frustration in this scene by describing increasingly unromantic images” is that the latter statement requires close reading to back it up.
- Repeat, question, and reflect on the use of individual words or phrases. Assume that the author chose every word carefully and had a reason for choosing one word over another. What do you make of the author’s word choice? Does a certain word have interesting connotations? Does it have a secondary meaning? (Try looking the word up in the dictionary.) What is the tone of this word? Think in terms of adjectives. Is it a harsh word, a fanciful word, an elaborate word? Is the word part of a larger network of words (for instance, how many words in *Equus* have to do with metal or plastic objects)?
- Think about tone. Again, think in terms of adjectives. Ask yourself *how* characters are expressing themselves. What is the emotion beneath the words? What details generate your sense of the emotion? Is punctuation important?
- Think about form. Is the character speaking in a monologue or a dialogue? What is the nature of his or her speech? Is it expressive or does it rely on a lot of insinuation? Why might a character mask his/her meaning in metaphor rather than speak directly? What is the rhythm? Are the sentences long and flowing or short and choppy? Is there any alliteration (the repetition of certain consonants)?
- Consider the relationship between form and content. Is there a difference between *what* a character is saying and *how* he or she is saying it? What is that difference? Alternatively, does the text reinforce its message by matching form and content?
- Consider the larger stage situation. Where are the characters? What are they doing while talking (sitting, standing, pacing, eating, crying, praying, etc.)? What is the relationship between what the characters are doing and what the characters are saying? Has the playwright provided stage directions in order to create a mood for the scene? What is that mood?
- Test the language for imagery and symbolism. Ask yourself why the writer chose specific nouns and verbs. Do they symbolize anything? Do they remind you of other images in the play?
- Connect this moment in the text to another moment. Ask yourself whether this moment in the text echoes an earlier moment or foreshadows a later one. If so, why? Does it echo/foreshadow exactly, or in a distorted way? Why is the repetition important?
- Consider unusual details. Find something about the passage that does not make sense to you: a strange image, an odd statement, a bizarre or unsettling moment. Then consider why the author might be trying to throw you off-balance. Alternatively, think about something fairly ordinary that surfaces so repeatedly that it becomes slightly odd.

- **Overall.....Use the text to generate your argument.** Rather than summarizing the main ideas of a scene and then providing a quotation to back yourself up, try leading with the quotation, analyzing it, and *then* drawing a conclusion. Close readings work from the bottom up: they start with words on the page and use those to build something bigger.

Narrative and Interpretation

Step One: what do you notice? what are your *observations*?

1. Who is the narrator? What is the narrator's situation? (look for shifts in speaker or situation)
2. What is the narrator's tone? (what words tell you this?)
3. What words are repeated? (ex: pronouns, nouns, verbs, etc.)
4. What are the verb tenses? Do they shift or change?
5. Are there shifts from singular to plural in nouns or verbs?
6. Is the language concrete or abstract? Does it shift or alternate?
7. What is the beginning? the end? the middle? how are these parts related to each other?
8. Is there a particular way of describing a character?
9. Are there any metaphors or images? Which seem important?
10. What is the relationship between the title and the text?
11. Are there any particular sound patterns? (e.g. alliteration)
12. What kind of world does the narrator create?
13. Is there a key moment in the passage?
14. Is there anything that disturbs or unsettles you in the passage?

Step two: how do you *interpret* what you have noticed?

1. How does each detail affect the way I read the passage?
2. Does the writer's language reinforce or contradict the content? Is there a difference between what he/she says and how he/she says it?

How to Do a Close Reading

The process of writing an essay usually begins with the close reading of a text. Of course, the writer's personal experience may occasionally come into the essay, and all essays depend on the writer's own observations and knowledge. But most essays, especially academic essays, begin with a close reading of some kind of text—a painting, a movie, an event—and usually with that of a *written* text. When you close read, you observe facts and details about the text. You may focus on a particular passage, or on the text as a whole. Your aim may be to notice all striking features of the text, including rhetorical features, structural elements, cultural references; or, your aim may be to notice only *selected* features of the text—for instance, oppositions and correspondences, or particular historical references. Either way, making these observations constitutes the first step in the process of close reading.

The second step is interpreting your observations. What we're basically talking about here is inductive reasoning: moving from the observation of particular facts and details to a conclusion, or interpretation, based on those observations. And, as with inductive reasoning, close reading requires careful gathering of data (your observations) and careful thinking about what these data add up to.

How to Begin:

1. Read with a pencil in hand, and annotate the text

"Annotating" means underlining or highlighting key words and phrases--anything that strikes you as surprising or significant, or that raises questions--as well as making notes in the margins. When we respond to a text in this way, we not only force ourselves to pay close attention, but we also begin to think with the author about the evidence--the first step in moving from reader to writer.

Here's a sample passage by anthropologist and naturalist Loren Eiseley. It's from his essay called "The Hidden Teacher:"

...I once received an unexpected lesson from a spider.

It happened far away on a rainy morning in the West. I had come up a long gulch looking for fossils, and there, just at eye level, lurked a huge yellow-and-black orb spider, whose web was moored to the tall spears of buffalo grass at the edge of the arroyo. It was her universe, and her senses did not extend beyond the lines and spokes of the great wheel she inhabited. Her extended claws could feel every vibration throughout that delicate structure. She knew the tug of wind, the fall of a raindrop, the flutter of a trapped moth's wing. Down one spoke of the web ran a stout ribbon of gossamer on which she could hurry out to investigate her prey.

Curious, I took a pencil from my pocket and touched a strand of the web. Immediately there was a response. The web, plucked by its menacing occupant, began to vibrate until it was a blur. Anything that had brushed claw or wing against that amazing snare would be thoroughly entrapped. As the vibrations slowed, I could see the owner fingering her guidelines for signs of struggle. A pencil point was an intrusion into this universe for which no precedent existed. Spider was circumscribed by spider ideas; its universe was spider universe. All outside was irrational, extraneous, at best raw material

for spider. As I proceeded on my way along the gully, like a vast impossible shadow, I realized that in the world Of spider I did not exist.

2. Look for patterns in the things you've noticed about the text—repetitions, contradictions, similarities.

What do we notice in the previous passage? First, Eiseley tells us that the orb spider taught him a lesson, thus inviting us to consider what that lesson might be. But we'll let that larger question go for now and focus on particulars—we're working inductively. In Eiseley's next sentence, we find, that this encounter "happened far away on a rainy morning in the West." This opening locates us in another time; another place, and has echoes of the traditional fairy tale opening: "Once upon a time. . ." What does this mean? Why would Eiseley want to remind us of tales and myth? We don't know yet, but it's curious. We make a note of it.

Details of language convince us of our location "in the West"—*gulch, arroyo, and buffalo grass*. Beyond that, though, Eiseley calls the spider's web "her universe" and "the great wheel she inhabited," as in the great wheel of the heavens, the galaxies. By metaphor, then, the web becomes the universe, "spider universe." And the spider, "she," whose "senses did not extend beyond" her universe, knows "the flutter of a trapped moth's wing" and hurries "to investigate her prey." Eiseley says he could see her "fingering her guidelines for signs of struggle." These details of language, and others, characterize the "owner" of the web as thinking, feeling, striving—a creature much like ourselves. But so what?

3. Ask questions about the patterns you've noticed—especially how and why.

To answer some of our own questions, we have. to look back at the text and see what else is going on. For instance, when Eiseley touches the web with his pencil point—an event "for which no precedent existed"—the spider, naturally, can make no sense of the pencil phenomenon: "Spider was circumscribed by spider ideas." Of course, spiders don't have ideas, but we do. And if we start seeing this passage in human terms, seeing the spider's situation in "her universe" as analogous to our situation our universe (which we think of as *the* universe), then we may decide that Eiseley is suggesting that our universe (*the* universe) is also finite, that *our* ideas are circumscribed, and that beyond the limits of our universe there might be phenomena as fully beyond our ken as Eiseley himself—that "vast impossible shadow"—was beyond the understanding of the spider.

But why vast and impossible, why a shadow? Does Eiseley mean God, extra-terrestrials? Or something else, something we cannot name or even imagine? Is this the lesson? Now we see that the sense of tale telling or myth at the start of the passage, plus this reference to something vast and unseen, weighs against a simple E.T. sort of interpretation. And though the spider can't explain, or even apprehend, Eiseley's pencil point, that pencil point *is* explainable-- rational after all. So maybe not God. We need more evidence, so we go back to the text--the whole essay now, not just this one passage--and look for additional clues. And as we proceed in this way, paying close attention to the evidence, asking questions, formulating interpretations, we engage in a process that is central to essay writing and to the whole academic enterprise: in other words, we reason toward our own ideas.

How to Write a Comparative Analysis

Throughout your academic career, you'll be asked to write papers in which you compare and contrast two things: two texts, two theories, two historical figures, two scientific processes, and so on. "Classic" compare-and-contrast papers, in which you weight A and B equally, may be about two similar things that have crucial differences (two pesticides with different effects on the environment) or two similar things that have crucial differences, yet turn out to have surprising commonalities (two politicians with vastly different world views who voice unexpectedly similar perspectives on sexual harassment).

In the "lens" (or "keyhole") comparison, in which you weight A less heavily than B, you use A as a lens through which to view B. Just as looking through a pair of glasses changes the way you see an object, using A as a framework for understanding B changes the way you see B. Lens comparisons are useful for illuminating, critiquing, or challenging the stability of a thing that, before the analysis, seemed perfectly understood. Often, lens comparisons take time into account: earlier texts, events, or historical figures may illuminate later ones, and vice versa.

Faced with a daunting list of seemingly unrelated similarities and differences, you may feel confused about how to construct a paper that isn't just a mechanical exercise in which you first state all the features that A and B have in common, and then state all the ways in which A and B are different. Predictably, the thesis of such a paper is usually an assertion that A and B are very similar yet not so similar after all. To write a good compare-and-contrast paper, you must take your raw data—the similarities and differences you've observed—and make them cohere into a meaningful argument. Here are the five elements required.

Frame of Reference. This is the context within which you place the two things you plan to compare and contrast; it is the umbrella under which you have grouped them. The frame of reference may consist of an idea, theme, question, problem, or theory; a group of similar things from which you extract two for special attention; biographical or historical information. The best frames of reference are constructed from specific sources rather than your own thoughts or observations. Thus, in a paper comparing how two writers redefine social norms of masculinity, you would be better off quoting a sociologist on the topic of masculinity than spinning out potentially banal-sounding theories of your own. Most assignments tell you exactly what the frame of reference should be, and most courses supply sources for constructing it. *If you encounter an assignment that fails to provide a frame of reference, you must come up with one on your own.* A paper without such a context would have no angle on the material, no focus or frame for the writer to propose a meaningful argument.

Grounds for Comparison. Let's say you're writing a paper on global food distribution, and you've chosen to compare apples and oranges. Why these particular fruits? Why not pears and bananas? The rationale behind your choice, the *grounds for comparison*, lets your reader know why your choice is deliberate and meaningful, not random. For instance, in a paper asking how the "discourse of domesticity" has been used in the abortion debate, the grounds for comparison are obvious; the issue has two conflicting sides, pro-choice and pro-life. In a paper comparing the effects of acid rain on two forest sites, your choice of sites is less obvious. A paper focusing on similarly aged forest stands in Maine and the Catskills will be set up differently from one comparing a new forest stand in

the White Mountains with an old forest in the same region. You need to indicate the reasoning behind your choice.

Thesis. The grounds for comparison anticipates the comparative nature of your thesis. As in any argumentative paper, your thesis statement will convey the gist of your argument, which necessarily follows from your frame of reference. But in a compare-and-contrast, the thesis depends on how the two things you've chosen to compare actually relate to one another. Do they extend, corroborate, complicate, contradict, correct, or debate one another? In the most common compare-and-contrast paper—one focusing on differences—you can indicate the precise relationship between A and B by using the word "whereas" in your thesis:

Whereas Camus perceives ideology as secondary to the need to address a specific historical moment of colonialism, Fanon perceives a revolutionary ideology as the impetus to reshape Algeria's history in a direction toward independence.

Whether your paper focuses primarily on difference or similarity, you need to make the relationship between A and B clear in your thesis. This relationship is at the heart of any compare-and-contrast paper.

Organizational Scheme. Your introduction will include your frame of reference, grounds for comparison, and thesis. There are two basic ways to organize the body of your paper.

- In *text-by-text*, you discuss all of A, then all of B.
- In *point-by-point*, you alternate points about A with comparable points about B.

If you think that B extends A, you'll probably use a text-by-text scheme; if you see A and B engaged in debate, a point-by-point scheme will draw attention to the conflict. Be aware, however, that the point-by-point scheme can come off as a ping-pong game. You can avoid this effect by grouping more than one point together, thereby cutting down on the number of times you alternate from A to B. But no matter which organizational scheme you choose, you need not give equal time to similarities and differences. In fact, your paper will be more interesting if you get to the heart of your argument as quickly as possible. Thus, a paper on two evolutionary theorists' different interpretations of specific archaeological findings might have as few as two or three sentences in the introduction on similarities and at most a paragraph or two to set up the contrast between the theorists' positions. The rest of the paper, whether organized text-by-text or point-by-point, will treat the two theorists' differences.

You can organize a classic compare-and-contrast paper either text-by-text or point-by-point. But in a "lens" comparison, in which you spend significantly less time on A (the lens) than on B (the focal text), you almost always organize text-by-text. That's because A and B are not strictly comparable: A is merely a tool for helping you discover whether or not B's nature is actually what expectations have led you to believe it is.

Linking of A and B. All argumentative papers require you to link each point in the argument back to the thesis. Without such links, your reader will be unable to see how new sections logically and systematically advance your argument. In a compare-and-contrast, you also need to make links between A and B in the body of your essay if you want your paper to hold together. To make these links, use transitional expressions of comparison and contrast (*similarly, moreover, likewise, on the*

contrary, conversely, on the other hand) and contrastive vocabulary (in the example below, *Southerner/Northerner*).

As a girl raised in the faded glory of the Old South, amid mystical tales of magnolias and moonlight, the mother remains part of a dying generation. Surrounded by hard times, racial conflict, and limited opportunities, Julian, *on the other hand*, feels repelled by the provincial nature of home, and represents a new Southerner, one who sees his native land through a condescending Northerner's eyes.

Lesson Plan: Choosing and Using Evidence

Objective: To help students find the best evidence to support their claims and to use their evidence productively.

Total Estimated Time: 50 minutes.

Assignment Underway: You can do exercises on finding and analysing evidence at different stages in the writing process and for almost any essay.

1. Have a conversation with your class about what counts as evidence (this may be different for your specific discipline than it is for mine). (10 minutes)
2. When students are first introduced to a reading, present the students with a thesis or claim and ask them to go through the text looking for the best piece of evidence to support that claim. (7-10 minutes)
3. Have them freewrite or brainstorm on their piece of evidence. They should try to come up with as many things to say about that piece of evidence as they can (they should focus on the text they've extracted, not move to generalizations). (5 minutes)
4. Ask students to share their evidence. Have a discussion about the nature of their examples. Have they extracted enough or too much of the text? Should their evidence be quoted or summarized? Have people chosen different examples? Have them debate the merits of their choice drawing on their freewrites. (20 minutes)
5. If you have time left, you might have students work in pairs or small groups to determine other ways their evidence could be interpreted. Is their interpretation the strongest? Why?

Or, have students return to the text to find the best piece of evidence to refute the claim or thesis you've provided. How would they handle this evidence in their papers?

Plan B: If students have already written a draft, ask them to go through their own or each other's papers marking evidence and analysis in different colors (you might have already done this in a workshop. Ask students to bring marked papers back to get more out of the exercise). Have them look at their own drafts and determine the ratio of evidence to analysis. Do they provide enough evidence for each claim? Enough analysis for each piece of evidence?

Working together, students should look at each piece of evidence and ask if it is the best possible choice. Has the author provided enough or too much of the text? If there's a quote, is it necessary? Or would a summary of the idea be better? (and vice versa).

Working on their own texts, ask students to extract a piece of evidence (especially one without much analysis) and freewrite or brainstorm for 5-10 minutes, extracting everything possible from it. Can they work some of the ideas from the freewrite back into the paragraph to get more out of their evidence?

Lesson Plan: Evidence and Analysis (Kerry Walk, Princeton)

Objective: To get students to perform true analysis of evidence, and move beyond mere paraphrase.

Time: 35 minutes

Assignment sequence that's underway: Any! But I usually teach this lesson early on in the course.

Step 1. Students read a published sample paragraph (see my choice below) and discuss issues related to evidence and analysis—for example, what's the proportion of evidence to analysis? How does the writer set up the evidence? How does the writer move beyond paraphrase in her analysis? 10 min.

Step 2. With the tools just created, students read and then assess the student sample paragraph (see my choice below). What are the strengths? the weaknesses? How should the writer revise? (10 min.)

Step 3. Students each choose a hotspot from one of the texts they're reading. With a particular claim in mind (if possible), they set up the evidence, then analyze it, using the published sample paragraph as their model. A few volunteers read what they've written, and/or pairs exchange writing and discuss, answering the question, "What more could be said?" (15 min.)

Susanne Wofford, from her introduction to the *Bedford Hamlet*

Structurally the Globe Theatre evoked the theatrical metaphor and actualized a concern that recurred in a number of Shakespeare's plays: the extent to which the human being can be defined as an actor.... The comparison of the human being to actor seemed to celebrate human flexibility and the power to shape the self for good or evil, but as the Renaissance progressed, writers came to recognize that the freedom to play any role, to take on any shape or quality of being—to be the consummate actor—also had its darker side, emphasized particularly by Puritan critics of the theater. They saw that to take seriously the idea of human being as actor is to accept that there may be no single, intrinsic or essential self (see Agnew 125-35). This sense of multiplicity is expressed in Hamlet's own radical use of the theatrical metaphor. As his father's ghost disappears, Hamlet responds to the ghost's command "remember me" with these words: "Remember thee! / Ay, thou poor ghost, whiles memory holds a seat / In this distracted globe" (1.5.95-97). He refers here simultaneously to his own head (the globe wherein his memory is lodged) and to the Globe Theatre. By comparing the workings of his mind to a play being played out on stage, he acknowledges both the theatricality of the self, even the inner self, and his own feelings of fragmentation. He implies that he finds within not simply the mourner he had insisted on a few scenes earlier but a multiple

self, perhaps even a fragmented self, the different parts of which are vying to be chief actor. "That within which passes show," Hamlet's phrase to describe the sincerity and power of his grief for his father a little earlier in the play, thus turns out to be a kind of theater after all. (10-11)

Mimi, from "Rise to the Occasion?" a paper on the "moment of grace" in Flannery O'Connor's "Everything That Rises Must Converge"

Perhaps Julian would elicit pity despite his character if he arrived at an epiphany and received grace. The ideal moment for such a transformation would be after his mother's confrontation with the black woman. Julian's mother, a prejudiced and bigoted woman, inappropriately offers a coin to the black woman's son (1046). "'He don't take nobody's pennies!'" (1046), the black woman calls. In the story's violent moment, she proceeds to hit Julian's mother with her handbag, the symbol of this black woman's (and all black people's) wealth and power. As his mother sits on the ground in a state of shock, Julian reprimands, "'I told you not to do that.... You got exactly what you deserved.... Now get up'" (1046). As the story progresses, Julian's mother walks home, ignoring Julian. When he finally catches her and looks into her eyes, he can hardly recognize his mother's face. He suddenly realizes that his mother's attitudes, not intentionally bigoted, come from a misguided person with human feelings. He calls out, "'Mama, Mama!'" (1048) as his mother dies. In the final moments of the story, "he [jumps] up and [begins] to run for help toward a cluster of lights he [sees] in the distance ... but ... the lights [drift] farther away ... the tide of darkness [seems] to sweep him back to her, postponing from moment to moment his entry into the world of guilt and sorrow" (1048).

Lesson Plan: Close Reading Film (Margaret Carkeet)

I use this exercise to prime my students on aspects of reading film: to go beyond simply “reading” the story and consider elements of film technique that contribute towards the viewer’s understanding of the meaning of the film.

As preparation for the lesson, the students should already have seen the film in question once. I also have students read Ch 3 of Tim Corrigan’s *A Short Guide to Writing About Film*, which I put on LATTE.

1. Ask students about the various components of film technique that Corrigan talks about. List these on the board as students suggest them. Make sure you have a list something like:
 - a. Story/Plot
 - b. Characters; Point-of-view
 - c. Mise-en-scène: sets/props, costumes, lighting
 - d. The shot, the frame
 - e. Editing (continuity, montage)
 - f. Sound
2. Have a brief discussion about how these different aspects might affect our reading of the film. For example, ask how camera angle (close vs. long-distance shots, a shot from below vs. a high angle shot) might affect our understanding of a character or event. For example, a low angle shot, which makes a character loom above the viewer, might suggest that this character occupies a position of authority.
3. Split students into groups of three or four; assign each group one aspect of film technique from your list.
 - a. Show a scene from the film you are reading. I have usually shown about 5 minutes of film – I find that opening scenes work well, or scenes where we are introduced to particular characters.
 - b. Each group must observe the scene from the point of view of their assigned aspect of film technique. The group assigned sound, for example, must pay attention to the soundtrack, the background noises, voiceover (if applicable), as well as dialogue. Ask the students to notice attributes of film technique and also suggest how those attributes contribute to our understanding of the film.
 - c. After showing the scene, ask each group to report. We discuss such questions as “How do we know who the protagonist is?” “Which character is meant to elicit our sympathy?” “Who are the figures of authority?”
 - d. This is where I try to encourage each group to think about the *consequences* of what they have noticed – and I have often found that there are some students who are much more “switched on” to these interpretations, so encourage everyone to speak up, even if it’s not their group’s turn.
 - e. If you have time, you can show the scene again, once the students have been alerted to the kind of close reading you are expecting of them. Keep the same groups and assignment of particular piece of film technique. Once they have been alerted to the nuances of film technique, they start to notice many more subtleties. After re-viewing

the scene, you can engage in further discussion, perhaps also addressing potential contradictions between what the story presents and what the film subtly conveys through non-story aspects.

Lesson Plan: Developing a Theoretical Lens (Alfie Guy, Princeton)

Lesson objective: Greater comfort applying a theory lens to another text

Total estimated time: 25-30 min

Additional outcomes: Students discuss and write about one of the two main readings for the unit

Assignment sequence that is underway: Compare and contrast essay using Marx's *Communist Manifesto* and a book by Mary Daly called *Gyn/Ecology*.

Work completed before class: Students have read the *Manifesto* and a theoretical essay about utopias, "Society as Utopia" by Alain Touraine. When reading Touraine I directed them to underline passages that felt interesting or important.

FYI: Steps 3-4 are the main point of the exercise. Under certain conditions, I might add steps or change any of the other steps.

Step 1: Students each select a Touraine passage that they want to work with. I encourage them to select one they don't understand if they have some feeling that it's important or compelling. (2-3 min)

Step 2: I call their attention to a passage I've identified as important and complex. I choose one that is rich but simple, such as: "Utopia is turned toward neither the past nor the future; it is a will towards the present, a program for re-creating society by means of government. More precisely, it constructs a society that is its own *raison d'être*." (2 min)

Step 3: I explain that one way to begin making use of a theory source is to turn a statement into a question, then to apply the question to your subject. I ask them to try turning parts of my Touraine passage into simple questions (2 min)

Step 4: We hear some of these questions aloud. If students essentially put a question mark on the whole passage, I solicit others who have made easier or smaller questions, until we get some of the following type:

- Is your subject (in this case Marx) turned away from the past?
- Is he focused on the present?
- Is there evidence of a will?
- Is there evidence of a program?

Follow-up questions are also allowed, such as: "If there is a program, is it one for re-creating society?" or "Does the program focus on the government?" Simple questions are best at this stage because we are looking for entry points into one text by means of another. (5 min)

Step 5: Once we have generated a few questions, we discuss possible answers. I then explain that a given passage is useful for analyzing a second text primarily if there is some friction or texture between the two. The simplest sign of this texture, if you have followed steps 1-4, is when you can answer "yes" to some of the smaller questions and "no" to the others. (For instance, while Touraine distinguishes between the past and the present, students sometimes see Marx as torn between

two.) Another symptom of potentially useful friction is when you feel some surprise at the answer, when you expect "no" but get "yes" instead, or vice versa. I ask if students have a sense of what I mean by this idea of "texture." I don't expect it to be fully clear; I am looking for frowns of partial comprehension. (5 min)

Step 6: I ask students to go back to the passage that they have selected in Step 1 and to break it down into some smaller questions. (2 min)

Step 7: I put students into pairs or threes (depending on time), and give the groups three jobs. (1) Help each student make simple questions out of their Touraine passage. (2) Discuss possible answers with regard to Marx. (3) Give a quick evaluation of the potential usefulness of the passage for making texture. (7 min)

Step 8: I ask each student to write 1-2 sentences about Marx using his or her selected passage from Touraine. I am not worried here about the form of the incorporation (which we have worked on before and will again later). (3-4 min)

Step 9: I ask if anyone has questions or feels stuck. There are other elaborations I might add to this exercise depending on circumstances, but this is its base form.

Lesson Plan: Steps for Applying a Lens (Dr. Kenneth Chan)

The following exercise works with Kerry Walk's "How to Write a Comparative Analysis" handout on the following page. It might be advisable to tweak Dr. Chan's steps in order to make them more applicable to your specific assignment.

1. Familiarize yourself with the "lens" method of comparative analysis as suggested in Kerry Walk's "How to Write a Comparative Analysis" (on the following page) ["In the 'lens' (or "keyhole") comparison, in which you weight A less heavily than B, you use A as a lens through which to view B. Just as looking through a pair of glasses changes the way you see an object, using A as a framework for understanding B changes the way you see B. Lens comparisons are useful for illuminating, critiquing, or challenging the stability of a thing that, before the analysis, seemed perfectly understood. Often, lens comparisons take time into account: earlier texts, events, or historical figures may illuminate later ones, and vice versa."]

2. Isolate in the A text a concept, an idea, or a theory that you can apply to your reading of B. Thoroughly read through A to understand the context and the meaning of the idea.

3. Identify in B a passage or scene that you want to close read using the idea from A as a "lens." Hint: find a passage that you can interpret one way when you read it without the "lens," and you can change your interpretation when you re-read it through the "lens" from A.

4. Proceed to close read the passage from B with and without the "lens." Establish the differences in the readings.

In completing the above steps, submit a brief statement of the idea which you will be using from A and the passage or scene from B which you will close read. Bring this to class.

5. Your thesis should include how the idea from text A affects the way you read the passage from text B. Provide also the "results" of your analysis of the passage from text B.

6. Devote at least one short paragraph in the body of your essay telling the reader what the idea from A is. Be sure to flesh out sufficiently the context in text A from which you extract the idea.

7. Proceed then to close read the passage or scene from text B.

Lesson Plan: Analysis and Annotation (Kevin Doyle)

Lesson Objective: To help students learn the skills of annotating and close reading by modeling and sharing.

Total Estimated Time: 30-40 minutes

Assignment Sequence: This in-class exercise can be conducted at any point in the term, though it probably makes sense to do so in either the close reading unit or the lens analysis unit.

Preparations/Supplements: Collect a sufficient number of copies of one edition of the *Brandeis Justice*, the *Brandeis Hoot*, or some other school publication so that you can present each student with a paper. Then, select an article or an editorial from this text that is of some appeal and is suitable for simulating the act of annotating. You may, of course, also give the class the right to vote on one or two choices.

Kerry Walk (handout), "Asking an Analytical Question"

Diana Hacker, "Writing About Texts"

Ryan Wepler, "Formulating Productive Writing Questions"

1. Ask the class to read the selection with care, focusing on argument and, if possible, evidence. Be sure to provide ample time for this step, and ask students to look up when done reading. (5-10 minutes)
2. Lead a discussion and/or a reading on annotating, distributing relevant handouts, if necessary. Refer to "Asking an Analytical Question," Hacker, "Writing About Texts," and/or Wepler, "Formulating Productive Writing Questions." (5-10 minutes). Note: This step may be omitted, or at least truncated, to allow for more time on step five below.
3. Next, ask the class to return to the selection, returning to a passage or two that caught the eye. Clarify that, while the piece may be skimmed at this time, it should not be reread in its entirety. (1-2 minutes)
4. Have students annotate the passage(s) and propose/write at least one good analytical question about the paragraph(s). If time allows, encourage the class to paraphrase its excerpts. (5-10 minutes)
5. Upon completion, recruit volunteers to share the passage(s) and the process(es) with the class. Have these volunteers first read the passage(s) aloud and then direct attention to sentences/words where they made annotations, explaining these notes and the question(s) that the text raised. (5-10 minutes). As always, close with a quick review.

Close Reading Songs in the UWS

Many of us who teach University Writing Seminars often incorporate songs into our curriculum. Analyses of songs can be one of the most effective things to use as a close reading. Most of the instructors and students enrolled in the classes, however, do not have any musical background. This handout serves as a guide for ways of teaching songs in the UWS.

1. Give the students the text of the song first. This would be a good time to have them paraphrase the song into prose as you would poetry (after all, song lyrics are, for all intents and purposes, poetry set to music). This will facilitate a close reading of the text.
2. After paraphrasing and close reading, add the music. I find that the most effective listeners are the students who do not have any musical background because they have to rely solely on their ears unlike those who are trained and often refer to the printed music. If you can, ask your students to isolate the music from the words and ask for observations. Some things that they should listen for are:
 - a. Tempo: how fast does the music move along?
 - b. Meter: does the music have groupings of two beats, three, four, more?
 - c. Rhythm: is the rhythm steady or changing; is the rhythm on the beat or syncopated; are silences used in interesting ways; are dance rhythms used?
 - d. Melody: is the music tuneful; is there a clear, singable, memorable melody; is the melody mostly stepwise or leaping; are folk tunes used?
 - e. Harmony: is the harmony sweet, strident, hollow, rich; is the harmony mainly consonant or dissonant; is the music in a major key or a minor key; does the harmonic progression seem logical or abrupt and surprising; are tensions resolved quickly or only after long stretches of time?
 - f. Orchestration: do strings, winds, brasses, or percussion instruments dominate; is the instrumentation steady or changeable; is the orchestral texture thick or thin?
 - g. Human Voices: are we hearing soprano, mezzo-soprano, alto, tenor, baritone, or bass; what combinations of voices do we hear; is the voice mainly a singer of tones, a reciter of words, or a little of both; does the voice respect the scansion of the poetry, its rhyme scheme, its figures of speech?
 - h. Dynamics: is the music loud, soft, somewhere between the two, steady, changeable; do the dynamics change suddenly or gradually?
 - i. Register, Range, and Tessitura: is the music in a high, middle, or low register; does a composition (or a singer's line) have a wide or narrow range; does the music lie in the comfortable or the uncomfortable area within the singer's range most of the time?
 - j. Form: is the song in common form (e.g. AABA as in most popular songs) or a special, tailor-made one?
 - k. Duets: who begins and who responds; who dominates; who waits for the other to complete a line or phrase, and who interrupts; who makes counterpoint with whose main line; do the two use similar rhythms, dynamics, and tunes; do they sing to each other or to the audience; does a chorus interact with the singers?
 - l. Expression: is the music sweet, angry, steady, erratic, tense, serene, relaxed, nervous, exaggerated, commonplace; does it use formulas to represent a character's age, sex, race, ethnicity, profession, etc.?

3. Then you can have the students place the words and music together and see how they are related, especially how the text reinforces the music and vice versa.

Interpreting the music in a specific moment of a piece should be done within the context of the rest of piece. For example, if the music is very melodious but the student encounters a chord that suddenly seems harsh, it would be wise to backtrack to that moment and find out what the text under the dissonant chord is. From here, the student can infer meaning. Likewise, if the piece is sampled, i.e. using the instrumental accompaniment from another well-known song under new text, it is always good to examine the implications of this borrowed music. One of my students is using an example for her research paper of a song about a man who wants to join a gang and in doing so he must rape someone and winds up raping his mother unknowingly. This eight-minute tale is told over the repetition of the opening of the theme to *Love Story*. As we can see, the opportunity for close reading and interpretation is bountiful.

Six Examples of Analysis

Sample #1: From a literature paper asserting that Julian, the main character of Flannery O'Connor's "Everything That Rises Must Converge," experiences what O'Connor calls a "moment of grace" at the end of the story.

Perhaps Julian would elicit pity despite his character if he arrived at an epiphany and received grace. The ideal moment for such a transformation would be after his mother's confrontation with the black woman. Julian's mother, a prejudiced and bigoted woman, inappropriately offers a coin to the black woman's son (1046). "He don't take nobody's pennies!" (1046), the black woman calls. In the story's violent moment, she proceeds to hit Julian's mother with her handbag, the symbol of this black woman's (and all black people's) wealth and power. As his mother sits on the ground in a state of shock, Julian reprimands, "I told you not to do that.... You got exactly what you deserved.... Now get up" (1046). As the story progresses, Julian's mother walks home, ignoring Julian. When he finally catches her and looks into her eyes, he can hardly recognize his mother's face. He suddenly realizes that his mother's attitudes, not intentionally bigoted, come from a misguided person with human feelings. He calls out, "Mama, Mama!" (1048) as his mother dies. In the final moments of the story, "he [jumps] up and [begins] to run for help toward a cluster of lights he [sees] in the distance ... but ... the lights [drift] farther away ... the tide of darkness [seems] to sweep him back to her, postponing from moment to moment his entry into the world of guilt and sorrow" (1048).

Sample #2: From an econ paper asserting that cities with a high share of lawyers will grow more slowly than other cities, but that cities with a high share of other educated professionals, such as doctors, will not grow more slowly than other cities.

The first column of Table II below shows the main effect predicted by theory. The second column shows that doctors do not have the same effect on city growth. Finally, the inclusion of regional dummy variables does not significantly affect the main point estimates, though statistical precision is lost.

TABLE II: Estimates of the Effect of Lawyers on City Growth
Dependent variable: City's Population Growth Rate, 1950-1990

| | (1) | (2) | (3) |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Share of Lawyers in Population, 1950 | -.09
(.01) | -.08
(.03) | -.07
(.05) |
| Share of Doctors In Population, 1950 | | .05
(.03) | .05
(.05) |
| Region Dummies Included ? | No | No | Yes |
| No. of Obs. | 25 | 25 | 25 |
| Adj. R2 | .10 | .12 | .50 |

TABLE II

Notes to Table II. Standard errors are in parentheses. The shares of doctors and lawyers are taken from the Five Percent Public Use Micro Sample of the 1950 U.S. Census and are defined as the share of each profession among employed persons in the population aged 25-64. A "city" is defined as Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area; constant SMSA definitions are used from 1950 to 1990. Region dummies correspond to the 10 "major regions" as defined by the Census Bureau.

Sample #3: From a literature paper asserting that Julian, the main character of Flannery O'Connor's "Everything That Rises Must Converge," does *not* experience a "moment of grace" at the end of the story.

Instead of staying by his mother's side in her last moments, Julian runs away from her—ostensibly to find help, but symbolically to reject his moment of grace, as implied by the light and dark imagery pervading the last paragraph of the story. Despite his sensation of running toward a cluster of lights, the lights become increasingly faint the more he runs, suggesting that the farther he runs from his mother, the more alienated he becomes from the possibility of Grace. He gradually loses the sensation of movement and admits that he has no place to go. He retreats into the "tide of darkness" (1048) at his mother's side, the unenlightened place, where, untouched by Grace, he need not yet enter "the world of guilt and sorrow" (1048). Though Grace is a means of salvation, Julian's acceptance of it would have forced a total knowledge of the injustice he has done his mother in his harsh condemnations of and sarcastic detachment from her. Not yet ready to fully recognize his own failures, which he can no longer amend because of his mother's stroke, Julian makes the choice to refuse Grace.

Sample #4: A revision of the econ paper above.

Table II shows that a high share of lawyers in a city's population appears to lead to slower growth. Yet, when all the determinants of city growth (such as Census Region growth) are accounted for, the estimate of this effect becomes less precise. The first column shows that a 10 percentage-point increase in the lawyer share of population decreases the future city growth by about .9 percentage points. Column 2 shows that, by contrast, a high doctor share does not lead to lower growth. In fact, the point estimate for the doctor share is positive, though not statistically significant. Note, however, that the estimates in Column 2 are less precise than those in Table 1, as the standard error for the lawyer effect rises from .01 to .03. Since the doctor and lawyer share are strongly (positively) correlated, multicollinearity reduces the precision of the regression. Statistical precision becomes even more of a concern in Column 3, when we add dummy variables for Census region. The size of the lawyer effect remains about the same (-.07 compared with -.09 and -.08), but adding so many new regressors causes the standard errors to rise to the point that the lawyer effect is statistically indistinguishable from zero. The implication is that lawyers do have a negative effect on city growth but that although the point estimate is robust to the inclusion of other relevant variables, it is not precisely estimated because of the small sample size.

Sample #5: Barbara Ehrenreich, from *Fear of Falling: The Inner Life of the Middle Class*, New York: Harper, 1989, pp. 258-59. Ehrenreich grabs a key concept from Alvin Gouldner, *The Future of Intellectuals and the New Class*, New York: Seabury, 1979, p. 29.

We tend to think of a problem, if we think of it at all, as a simple *lack* on the part of the “lower” classes, most likely a simple lack of vocabulary. Stereotypes of verbally deprived workers come to mind: Archie Bunker with his malapropisms, Ed Norton braying humbly on *The Honeymooners*. But usually it is the middle class that is speaking the strange language—something sociologist Alvin Gouldner called “critical discourse.” This is the language of the academy and also of bureaucracy; and, in his analysis, it defines the professional middle class as a “speech community.” It is distinguished, above all, by its impersonal and seemingly universal tone. Within critical discourse, Gouldner writes,

Persons and their social positions must not be visible in their speech. Speech becomes impersonal. Speakers hide behind their speech. Speech seems to be disembodied, de-contextualized, and self-grounded.

Relative to the vernacular, critical discourse operates at a high level of abstraction, always seeking to absorb the particular into the general, the personal into the impersonal. This is its strength. But the rudely undemocratic consequences that individual statements from “below” come to seem almost weightless, fragmentary, unprocessed.... The way across language barrier lies, first, through awareness of the middle-class assumptions that automatically denigrate “ordinary” styles of speech. In the longer term, we need a critical discourse itself. Is there a way to “re-embody” the middle class’s impersonal mode of discourse, so that it no longer serves to conceal the individual and variable speaker? For we may need to find ourselves in the language of abstraction, if we are ever to find the “others” in the language of daily life.

Sample #6: Susanne Wofford, from her introduction to her edition of *Hamlet*, Boston and New York: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1994, pp. 11-12.

Structurally the Globe Theatre evoked the theatrical metaphor and actualized a concern that recurred in a number of Shakespeare's plays: the extent to which the human being can be defined as an actor.... The comparison of the human being to actor seemed to celebrate human flexibility and the power to shape the self for good or evil, but as the Renaissance progressed, writers came to recognize that the freedom to play any role, to take on any shape or quality of being—to be the consummate actor—also had its darker side, emphasized particularly by Puritan critics of the theater. They saw that to take seriously the idea of human being as actor is to accept that there may be no single, intrinsic or essential self (see Agnew 125-35). This sense of multiplicity is expressed in Hamlet's own radical use of the theatrical metaphor. As his father's ghost disappears, Hamlet responds to the ghost's command "remember me" with these words: "Remember thee! / Ay, thou poor ghost, whiles memory holds a seat / In this distracted globe" (1.5.95-97). He refers here simultaneously to his own head (the globe wherein his memory is lodged) and to the Globe Theatre. By comparing the workings of his mind to a play being played out on stage, he acknowledges both the theatricality of the self, even the inner self, and his own feelings of fragmentation. He implies that he finds within not simply the mourner he had insisted on a few scenes earlier but a multiple self, perhaps even a fragmented self, the different parts of which are vying to be chief actor. "That within which passes show," Hamlet's phrase to describe the sincerity and power of his grief for his father a little earlier in the play, thus turns out to be a kind of theater.

Strong and Weak Close Reading Examples

In his final monologue, Dysart questions whether normalization will strip Alan of the most elemental passions he has ever experienced. Eventually, his patient may not even recognize his personal deity, Equus, or remember what his brand of worship meant. “I’ll set [Alan] on a nice mini-scooter and send him puttering off into the world,” Dysart predicts (Shaffer 109). Here, Dysart expresses his inner doubt, his frustration with his profession, and his own sense of self-loathing. Dysart continues to express his uncertainty when he tells Alan that, in the future, “horses will be quite safe. You’ll save your pennies every week, till you can change that scooter in for a car, and put the odd 50p on the gee-gees” (Shaffer 109). In this quotation, Dysart describes the average citizen’s idea of a horse: to most people, these animals are “gee-gees,” harmless creatures on the racecourse. In considering these issues, Dysart is torn between professional and personal beliefs; he wants to help Alan, but all he can offer his patient is a “nice mini-scooter,” a consolation that seems entirely inadequate.

In his final monologue, Dysart expresses contempt for everyday life through a series of images that provide a disdainful view of the “normal.” “I’ll set [Alan] on a nice mini-scooter and send him puttering off into the world,” Dysart says (Shaffer 109). The image of Alan riding a mini-scooter resonates with earlier images of his midnight rides on Nugget, although now the image appears both comic and pathetic. The steed has become a scooter, and it is a mini one, at that. Far from galloping off into the sunset, Alan will “putte[r]” into the future astride a vehicle that is small and non-threatening. The Merriam Webster Dictionary explains that puttering means “to move or act aimlessly or idly, to work at random” (n.p.). Alan, once so purpose-driven, now meanders, without any genuine motivation. Additionally, “puttering” calls up images of putts on the golf course – the typical Sunday activity of a typical citizen. Dysart goes on to tell Alan that “you won’t gallop anymore . . . Horses will be quite safe. You’ll save your pennies every week, till you can change that scooter in for a car, and put the odd 50p on the gee-gees” (Shaffer 109). Once again, Dysart employs a metaphor that is self-consciously diminutive: as a functional member of society, Alan will *only* have “the odd 50p” or “pennies” to spare, and those pennies will serve a drearily conventional purpose, allowing Alan to buy another mechanical object. What is more, Alan’s relationship to horses will be entirely transformed: they will no longer seem mysterious or special. Dysart emphasizes this transformation through his vocabulary, taking the Latin name of Alan’s god and replacing it with slang. For Alan, the mighty Equus will become, merely, a “gee-gee,” a casual word that – with its elongated “e” – sounds almost like baby-talk. As Dysart’s words devolve into slang, he seems to surrender to the inevitable conventionality of Alan’s future.

Structure & Transition

Structure Exercise #1 – The Cut Up

Before class, find a short essay or article (four pages or less) with strong transitions and a reasonably clear structure, format it with one paragraph per page, print several copies, and number them in a random order.

1. In class, have students break into groups of four or five and attempt to reassemble the article.
2. After ten to fifteen minutes (depending on the length of the article), have the groups report back to you on the order of the paragraphs. To save time, simply have them tell you the number combination.
3. After giving them the answer, discuss the cues in the paragraphs that allowed them to put it in the proper order.
4. If there are common mistakes, discuss the evidence in the paragraphs that caused students to place the paragraphs in that order.
5. If time permits, you may also discuss other issues: disagreements among group members about paragraph placement, &c.

This exercise should take about 20-25 minutes. Passing the cut up essays out in envelopes will help you keep them organized.

Structure Exercise #2 – The Cut Up (Paragraph Style)

Before class, find a paragraph of average length (six to eight sentences) with strong transitions and a reasonably clear structure, format it in bullet points of one sentence each, print several copies, and number them in a random order.

1. In class, have students break into groups of four or five and attempt to reassemble the paragraph.
2. After ten to fifteen minutes (depending on how well the students are doing), have the groups report back to you on the order of the sentences. To save time, simply have them tell you the number combination.
3. After giving them the answer, discuss the cues in the sentences that allowed them to put it in the proper order. How, for example, did they identify the topic sentence? The final sentence?
4. If there are common mistakes, discuss the evidence in the paragraph that caused students to place the sentences in that order.
5. If time permits, you may also discuss other issues: disagreements among group members about sentence placement, &c.

This exercise should take about 20-25 minutes. Passing the cut up paragraphs out in envelopes will help you keep them organized.

Structure Exercise #3 – Putting it All Together

The following exercise essentially combines “The Cut Up” and “The Cut Up (Paragraph Style)” exercises. Though it may seem more ambitious, working on the sentence level first will help you to identify the cues for assembling the cut up paragraphs as a complete essay.

Before class: Students have read a paragraph from a published essay that has been disassembled into separate sentences. They must recreate the paragraph by deciding the proper order of the sentences.

Step 1: In class, we (the whole group) discuss the order of the paragraph: starting with topic and topic sentences, we put it together sentence-by-sentence; we explicitly mention what allows us to decide what's an "introduction", "body" and "conclusion" in a paragraph. This can be fun, since alternative orders are conceivable. (10 min)

Step 2: Then we do the same with a whole paper in groups of 3 or 4. I hand out a paper with each paragraph on a separate sheet. After groups figure out the order (30 minutes or so), we discuss the order and what allows us (from the concrete transitional devices to conceptual markers) to decipher it. (10 minutes)

Step 3: I ask students to note down one or two specific/concrete idea/example/strategy, etc. they have seen in this sample paper that they could/would use in their own writing to make the stitching stronger. These can be features that made it possible to reconstruct the essay or gaps they noted that made particular re-connections difficult to resolve. We mention a few of those. (3-5 minutes)

Structure Exercise #4 – The Reverse Outline

This exercise is similar to the reverse outline that students might compose as a pre-draft assignment. However, this can be done in class. When analyzing a sample student essay, assign three students to individually outline the essay as you go through it as a class. When you've finished working your way through it, ask each student to present his or her outline (they may even write them on the board). The reverse outlines can then serve as the foundation for a discussion of the structure of the sample essay.

Structure Exercise #5 – Paragraph Structure (Ryan Wepler)

Since this exercise requires little preparation from students, I typically use it on days in which I've asked a lot of them for homework (possibly when annotated bibliographies are due). The exercise prescribes a fairly rigid structure for a successful paragraph. You might tell students that this structure is intended as a strong basic model and need not be rigidly adhered to in every body paragraph.

As it is written below, the exercise works for the research essay. However, you could easily tweak the steps for use in the lens and close reading units. Its primary advantage is that it allows students to leave class with a piece of writing that they can use (after revision) in their essays.

The following are the directions as I deliver them to my class. For this model, students are required to bring three of their research essay sources to class.

1. Write numbers from 1-4 evenly spaced down the side of a sheet of notebook paper
2. Take five minutes and find two quotations from the three sources you brought today that either
 - a. Combine to make a new claim, or
 - b. Make a claim and provide examples
 - c. Make similar claims using different language
3. By #2, write two sentences:
 - a. The first of which introduces and offers a quotation
 - b. The second of which interprets the quotation
 - i. Have students read their sentences (check for proper introductions to quotations)
4. By #3, write one sentence that:
 - a. Transitions from the first source to the second
 - b. Introduces and quote the second source
 - i. Have students read their sentences
5. By #4, write 2-3 sentences that discuss the sources together and what they show.
 - a. These sentences should establish a clear claim about some aspect of your essay topic.
 - i. Have students read their sentences
6. By #1, write a topic sentence for the paragraphs they have just written below.
 - a. Also look over and revise your sentences into a paragraph
 - i. Have students read their paragraphs aloud

Estimated time: 30-35 minutes.

Structure Exercise #6 – From Thesis to Structure (Ryan Wepler)

This exercise (which typically receives positive feedback from students) attempts to model the creation of an organic essay structure. In preparation for the exercise, I ask students to e-mail me their theses the night before class (or post them on LATTE). I then sort through them and choose two from which I could derive a series of claims as the structure for an essay. Most of them are usually too vague to use, but there are usually a few specific ones that work well for this exercise. Type the two exercises on a piece of paper, label them #1 and #2, and make enough copies for the entire class.

The following is a rough outline of the series of discussion questions I would pose to my class. These need to be somewhat fluid depending on the direction the discussion takes.

For Thesis #1 (complete exercise as a class):

1. *What is the author arguing?*
2. *What types of evidence are necessary to prove that claim? (WRITE ON BOARD)*
 - a. *(i.e. What smaller claims must the author make in order to prove this claim?)*
3. *[What is the most logical order in which to place the evidence?]*
 - a. *What types of evidence should come first? Why?*
 - i. *(ask if there's agreement)*
 - b. *What would come next? ...&c.*
4. *We want to keep this structured around the author's ideas? Can we articulate the claims that govern each section of evidence?*

For Thesis #2 (students begin on their own, then complete in groups, followed by discussion)

Students write down (one step at a time):

1. The evidence necessary to prove such a claim
2. Number that evidence in a logical progression
3. Title the steps in that progression (as a series of claims)

Students break into 4 groups

4. Discuss your various proposals for structuring the paper and try to reach a consensus

Group Discussion Questions:

1. *How many logical steps did you have in your outline?*
2. *Ask one group what their first step was. (pick random member to address question to)*
 - a. *Ask for assent from other groups*
3. *Pose question about next step to another group*
 - a. *Ask for assent (& continue process until outline is complete)*

Structure Exercise #7 – Putting Topic and Conclusion Sentences to the Test (Ryan Wepler)

The most common paragraph structure that we teach in UWS requires students to introduce the claim of the paragraph in the topic sentences and to return to an evolved version of that claim in the final sentence of the paragraph. This exercise gives students feedback on how successfully they are following this structure (which they should be familiar with by this point in the course). It requires students to have their essays with them, so it works best in a class during which students will be submitting rough drafts. Since it involves three pieces of paper, you need to be clear in your directions to students. For the sake of clarity, I have written the directions as you would deliver them to students in class.

“Take out three blank sheets of paper and label them #1, #2, & #3.”

“On #1, write the topic sentence of the third body paragraph of your essay.”

“On #2, write the final sentence of your third body paragraph.”

“On #3, write your own summary of what this paragraph is about.”

“Pass #1 two people to your left.”

“Based on the topic sentence on the sheet you’ve received write:

1. What you think the paragraph is about
2. What you think the author’s thesis is”

[pass back]

“Pass #2 two people to your left.”

“Based on the concluding sentence you’ve received, write:

3. What you think the paragraph is about
4. What you think the author’s thesis is”

[pass back]

“Read through the responses you have received to your topic and concluding sentences and compare them to what you initially wrote that your paragraph was about.”

“On #3 write how you would revise the paragraph based on the feedback you’ve gotten.”

Structure Exercise #8 – Modeling Transitions with Sample Essays (Ahmet Bayazitoglu, Princeton)

Goals: Work on sample papers with strong transitions, observe and note stitching strategies, and apply them to works-in-progress.

Background and Preparation: At this point, my students had a full draft of their 2” paper (i.e. text-through-theory paper). In preparation for class, they read two sample essays (written in response to the same “theory-as-lens” assignment, these essays were particularly handy for me: they used some of the same theoretical sources (theories of nationalism, mostly, such as Renan and Anderson), but were on a primary text unfamiliar to my current students: same “lens”, unfamiliar “text”, in short, which makes it easier to isolate ‘structures’).

In preparation for this part of the assignment (I was using the sample essays for other things, as well), they had to:

- jot down the “point/function/main idea” of each paragraph in the sample essays;
- highlight the concrete means (the specific word, phrase, etc.) of stitching;
- jot down the “logic” of each instance of stitching.

(with full length papers, this preparation should take 45 minutes).

In class: Part of the point of the exercise is for them to see very good overall examples of stitching, transitions, and structuring (hence the reason for an outline of the paper by writing down the “point” of each paragraph).

1) We go over each transition between paragraphs in the sample papers, talk about what makes for successful transitions, which ones are weak (or missing), etc. Since the sample essays are quite good in this regard, there are only a few glaring problems to address.

2) We write alternatives for each (collectively so deemed-) weak transition.

3) They then work on their own drafts for about 10-12 minutes: the point is to isolate the transitions between paragraphs (or note their absence), revise them, note problems, start formulating alternatives using strategies from the samples when possible, etc.
(should be a total of 40 minutes)

Structure Exercise #9 – Transition Derby (The Ohio State Writing Program)

This activity emphasizes the importance of good transitions, and gives them a way start thinking about transitions in their own writing.

1. Start with a mini-lecture about transitions, perhaps with a short overhead and a handout (the “Signal Words” handout on the following page works well).
2. Ask students to write 2-3 sentences about an animal of any kind (you can certainly modify these prompts, but keep them very vague).
3. After they have completed this, tell them to pass their paper on to the person next to them. Now, they are to read the paragraph in front of them and effectively transition into a paragraph about a place. You may want to remind them to look at the sample transition words.
4. Ask them to pass their paper on to a new student. Now their task is to effectively transition into a paragraph about an event.
5. Tell your students to pass their “mini-essays” back to the original author. Ask students to share their “mini-essays” with the class. These are usually pretty funny, but can also be very successful.

After each example is read, you may want to have your class discuss the specific tactics used to transition effectively.

Estimated Time: 20-30 minutes

Stitching Handout: Signal Words

Concluding Phrases

| | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|---------------|--------------|
| For the reasons above | To sum up | In short | In brief |
| As you can see | To be sure | Undoubtedly | In any event |
| As I have noted | Without a doubt | In conclusion | In any case |
| In other words | In summation | Obviously | Concluding |
| On the whole | Unquestionably | Summarizing | |

Supporting Opinions

| | | | |
|---------|-------------|----------|-----------|
| First | Furthermore | Besides | Further |
| Second | In addition | Next | Again |
| Third | Also | Moreover | Similarly |
| Finally | Last | | |

Introducing Details

| | | |
|-------------|--------------|--------------------|
| For example | For instance | In support of this |
| In fact | As evidence | |

Cause and Effect

| | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Since | Caused by | In effect |
| Because of | This results in | Brought about |
| Due to | Consequently | Made possible |
| For this reason | Accordingly | As might be expected |
| Therefore | As a result of | Give rise to |
| If...then | Leads to | Was responsible for |

Compare and Contrast

| | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Similarly | Likewise | As well as | Whether or not |
| Compared to | In the same way | Have in common | Even though |
| In like manner | Contrasting | All are | Rather than |
| On the other hand | On the contrary | The same as | Never the less |
| Although | As opposed to | Conversely | In spite of |

Countering

I realize you

I understand you

Even though you

Although you

Some people

It may be that you

Your ideas to ___deserves some merit

Nevertheless

Believe

Feel

Maintain

Want

Favor

Support

Argue

State

But

Yet

However

I doubt

I question

Let me explain

On the other hand

On the contrary

Structure Exercise #10 – Structure in a Lens Essay (Ryan Wepler)

In terms of having an immediate effect on the quality of students essays, this is one of my most successful in class exercises. Nearly all of the preparation goes into constructing the handouts beforehand. The best part of this exercise is that it provides rigid guidance for the students while still holding them responsible for the critical thinking. This provides the kind of baseline lens reading that most students struggle to produce. You should challenge stronger students to push beyond this model by using discrepancies between the two sources to reflect critically on the lens text.

Constructing the handout:

The handout rests on the model that the lens essay uses a lens text that derives a particular meaning from a cultural form and attempts to transfer that meaning to the text under examination. Though you can subdivide them, it consists of five questions structured as you would like your students to structure their essays. The questions are as follows:

1. Describe the key concept from the lens text.
2. Explain how some aspect of the text you are reading resembles that concept.
3. Describe the meaning that the lens author attributes to the key concept you identified in question #1.
4. Explain how we can locate that meaning into the text you are reading.
5. Write a thesis statement for an essay you could write based on your findings above.

The exercise works as follows:

1. I typically lecture for about 2 minutes about how the structure of students' lens essays should follow the logical arc of the lens text.
2. I pass out the handout and ask students to complete it in groups of 3-4. It usually takes them about 20 minutes to complete the handout. I require them to analyze specific moments from the text they are reading through the lens. Make sure you circulate from group to group to keep them on task and to provide guidance.
3. Ask groups to share the structures they came up with in a final discussion. I usually have every group give a brief outline and focus on one groups outline to expand during an extended class discussion/

Some of my sample handouts

[The original handouts contain spaces below each question for the students to write their answers.]

Version #1:

Define Deleuze's concept of "encoding."

Locate and describe one or more examples of "encoding" in *Breakfast of Champions*.

According to Deleuze, how does humor function as a tactic of resistance to encoding?

Locate and describe one or more examples of humor being used to resist encoding in *Breakfast of Champions*.

Please offer a one-sentence thesis statement for an essay you could write based upon your findings above.

Version #2:

Describe what carnivalesque humor looks like, according to Bakhtin.

List examples of moments in *The Crying of Lot 49* that could be described as carnivalesque.

Bakhtin describes carnival as producing “a temporary suspension of all hierarchic distinctions and barriers among men” (15). Describe *how* carnivalesque humor accomplishes this, according to Bakhtin (there are several possible answers to this question).

Choose one or more of the carnivalesque moments from *The Crying of Lot 49* listed above and describe *how* it follows the process described in the previous question to create “a temporary suspension of all hierarchic distinctions and barriers among men” (15).

Describe the function of this “suspension of all hierarchic distinctions” in Pynchon’s novel.

Please offer a one-sentence thesis statement for an essay you could write based upon your findings above.

Version #3:

Describe what carnivalesque humor looks like, according to Bakhtin.

List examples of moments in *Breakfast of Champions* that could be described as carnivalesque (try to link your examples to one of Bakhtin’s three categories of carnivalesque humor).

Bakhtin describes carnival as “belong[ing] to the borderline between art and life” and claims, “in reality, it is life itself” (7). Describe *how* carnivalesque humor affirms and celebrates life, according to Bakhtin (there are several possible answers to this question).

Choose one or more of the carnivalesque moments from *Breakfast of Champions* listed above and describe *how* it follows the process described in the previous question to generate what Bakhtin describes as “the world’s revival and renewal” (7).

Describe the function of this “revival and renewal” of human life in Vonnegut’s novel.

Please offer a one-sentence thesis statement for an essay you could write based upon your findings above.

Structure Exercise #11 – Go Sox! (Amanda Hemmesch)

Time: about 20 minutes (5 minutes in group, 10 minutes for presenting and discussing orders, 5 minutes for discussion)

Break students into groups of 4. Tell them that they want to write a paper about the Boston Red Sox incorporating diverse information about the team. Their job is to arrange the eight topics below into a cohesive order for the body paragraphs of this proposed paper. Discuss within your group and prepare to share your order and logic with the class.

1. The thesis: The Boston Red Sox are the most-loved team in baseball because of their storied history and their ability to attract players that fans gravitate toward

2. The paragraph topics, arrange them how you would in an essay:

- The Curse of the Bambino: 5 World Series titles from 1903-1918, then traded Babe Ruth to the Yankees, 86-year dry spell
- Reversing the curse in 2004
- Big Papi, the lovable slugger
- Jon Lester: cancer surviving pitcher
- Manny Ramirez: lazy, antics
- Why the Sox are better than the Cubs
- Insane fan base
- Fenway Park

3. Share your order with the class, explaining why you placed each topic where you did

This exercise opened up a discussion about how there are many potentially sound orders to choose for presenting information, and also how it is crucial to use good stitching/transitions to guide readers through the logic of your progression. Students also enjoyed talking about the Red Sox instead of the usual course topics.

Structure Exercise #12 – Radio Lab: Scholarly Structure across Media (Jeremy Spindler)

Radio Lab is a radio show/podcast broadcast weekly out of New York City in WNYC public radio. While some episodes lean towards the “popular” side of things, most focus on presenting academic research in a presentation format through scripted readings and interviews. Often several scholars are brought together under an umbrella topic with the format of the show resembling an aural research essay.

This exercise comes in handy when students need a break from the usual paper-based exercise. In this exercise a scholarly source other than a text—in this case an episode from *Radio Lab*—is analyzed for structure on many levels. The main purpose of this exercise is to show that *all* types of scholarly media use the same fundamental structure, not just written texts. In order to substantiate *any* claim, whether written, spoken, or presented in video format, this basic academic structure must be present in order to get the claim(s) communicated effectively to the audience.

Assignment underway: lens or research

Time required: 30-50 minutes (whether you listen during class or beforehand)

Lesson objectives:

1. Provides a break from the usual paper-based/reading activity
2. Requires active *listening* instead of the usual active *reading*. This results in a more focused on-the-spot concentration in class since they do not have the text sitting right in front of them. Since I am a musician I especially like the listening aspect of it. (I use the *Radio Lab* episode “Musical Language,” but just about any *Radio Lab* podcast will work for this exercise.)
3. Shows that these fundamental academic structures exist in all forms of media. Why is this important? I have found that some students are resistant to the structures outlined in the UWS as they claim that the structures are “artificial”, “dry”, and “implanted.” By showing them that this structure is necessary in any situation in which a claim is being made, including film and radio, some students suddenly realize the importance of this structure and subsequently put more effort into the structure of their essays.
4. The particular “Radio Lab” episode that I use also shows how humor can be incorporated into a serious scholarly subject. Much of the humor in this episode comes in the form of sound effects and background “cuteness”; however, with creativity you can incorporate similar humor in a written essay as well.

In Class:

1. Play a segment of the particular podcast you like or perhaps have them listen to the whole podcast at home and come in prepared with an analysis.

2. Analyze the podcast in much the same way as you would a *Write Now* essay. Locate thesis, motive, paragraph structure, transitions, etc. When I use this exercise in class I like to point out/discuss how even in a radio program such as “Radio Lab” there is still an introduction with all of the proper components, paragraphs, claims, evidence, and analysis, and in particular I like to discuss how the hosts and scholars transition from one ‘paragraph’ to the next and how everything builds on what was previously discussed.

Structure Exercise #13 – Double Essay Cut Up (Steve Plunkett)

Before class: Assign two sample student essays for your students to read, one with a strong, organically evolving argument, one with a argument that demonstrates an assertion with multiple examples (i.e., five paragraph essay). Print out three copies of each essay, with the paragraphs marked in order alphabetically along the margin. Cut up the labeled paragraphs and place the collection of paragraphs into six envelopes, one complete essay per envelope.

Step 1: Divide the class into 6 groups and distribute the packets. Give the students 5 minutes to rearrange the paragraphs in their packet in an order different from the original (which they've read and are familiar with).

Step 2: Come back as a class and ask the groups what they did with the essays in their packets. Discuss the orderings they've chosen, and why the essay paragraphs can be reordered that way, or conversely why they can't be effectively reordered. Since the five paragraph essay makes broad claims it attempts to prove with a list of examples, the paragraphs will be largely interchangeable; this can be contrasted to the organically evolving essay that requires the claims of one paragraph to move into the next, and the next, all the way through to the conclusion.

Step 3: Recapitulate what has been said about the structures of the two essays, comparing and contrasting them. Explain why the organically evolving essay structure is preferable, and point out the structural elements of the paragraphs (topic sentences, claims, transitions, etc.) that create the sense of a developing argument.

Structure Exercise #14: Thinking About Paragraph Form

Paragraph Comparisons (Brenden O'Donnell)

The goal of this exercise is to draw students' attention to the peculiarity of the paragraph form: why do we choose these weird blocks of text to organize our words when we write in prose? To raise this question deliberately, we compare paragraphs in fiction and in nonfiction. I start by close reading the first two samples, from fiction, stopping to recap after each, taking inventory of the themes the paragraphs are building. Then we close read the paragraph of nonfiction, taking inventory of critical concepts and writing style. Finally, we compare the themes of the fiction with the critical terms of the nonfiction. This is a great way to show students what a paragraph "topic" is, from two different angles.

Fiction

Sam's house was on a quiet block of Greenwich Village near Washington Square. The section had changed, was changing still. Apartment houses filled what had been open sky. Many of the old houses remained, but not in sufficient numbers to stamp the area with their character, as they once had done. The house had belonged to Sam's father, and to Sam's grandfather, whose names were also Samuel Kendrick. Sam's grandfather had founded the publishing house of Kendrick's and brought it to its first glory. During the father's time the company flourished for a while; for a longer stretch of years it managed merely to hold its own. (Bronski 57-8)

Mrs. Kennedy had worried, at first, too, that something was wrong with the baby, that it had not been wise of her to have borne him at such an advanced age, but the child had walked and talked long before he was expected to do so and he read at the age of four. Of course, Belle had taught him to do that as a joke. But the joke had been on them for too early he was in school, too soon his marks were excellent, too often his teachers came to Mrs. Kennedy privately to say, "There's really no point in holding Tom [never Tommy, even in those days] back in the coming grade all next year, so if it's all right with you, I think I'll ask the principal to let him skip the second grade." And the fourth and the seventh, until he was graduating from high school before his fifteenth birthday. It was so absurd, his wanting to go on to the university the very next year, but somehow he had persuaded them to allow it. And yet, the boy had never been spoiled or pretentious about his unusual ability. He was so grown-up, even in his humor. (Bronski 89)

Non-Fiction

Whileaway is widely considered a "feminist utopia," according to *The Wesleyan Anthology of Science Fiction* (507). Whileaway is also "lucky," as Janet, the narrator, puts it; after the plague that killed all of the men, it was still composed of geniuses and scientists who were willing and able to rebuild and recover the colony (510). In comparison to Earth-women, who are defined by their marriages to Earth-men, all characters on Whileaway have full personalities that do not rely on comparison to established and familiar male stereotypical roles (512). (From *Write Now!*, Simpson 12)

Structure Exercise #15: How to Structure a Paragraph

Paragraph structure exercise:

This generally takes up a full class, but I think it's worth the time. I begin by explaining that every paragraph should have four components:

1. *The topic sentence or claim:* this should summarize what's being argued in the paragraph. In other words, a reader should be able to tell from the first sentence what will be discussed in the paragraph.
2. *An introduction to the evidence followed by the evidence:* sentences should never start with a quotation—they must be properly introduced first. Imagine that someone read your text a couple of years ago and will not be familiar with the details. The introduction to the quotation should place it in a context. For example, "In the chapter on XYZ, the author recounts an anecdote about ABC."
3. *Analysis:* this involves engagement with, or close reading of, the evidence. I tell students to analyze anything that they quote.
4. *Relevance:* the last sentence of the paragraph should tie back to the thesis to signal a clear progression of the argument. Students can have incredibly elegant paragraphs that have nothing to do with their thesis.

After reviewing these elements I give students a motive and thesis that I've made up based on a text that we've read together. For obvious reasons, be sure that students could not possibly use your thesis in their essay. I then give them evidence from the text that supports my thesis, which we analyze together (this gives students additional practice with close reading). At this point, I break the class into groups of 3 and have them do the following using my thesis and the evidence we've discussed:

1. Write a topic sentence and put it on the board. We read these aloud together and discuss what works and what doesn't. How do we make weak topic sentences better?
2. Introduce and cite evidence and put the sentence on the board. We similarly workshop this.

And then we repeat the exercise for analysis and relevance. By the end of the exercise students will have constructed a complete paragraph, which can then serve as a model for their essays. I've found that having students physically write a paragraph together is much more effective than merely pontificating about the best way to do it. And coming together after each sentence rather than waiting until the end keeps them on track.

As a more minor point, I also tell students that there are generally three ways to introduce evidence (with a comma, colon and no punctuation):

Gawande explains, "The patient needed a central line" (11).

Gawande discusses the first procedure that he learned by practicing on a patient: "The patient needed a central line" (11).

Gawande explains that "The patient needed a central line" (11).

You could obviously write your own sentences and use the format appropriate to your discipline (this is MLA).

Topic Sentences and Structure

What is a topic sentence? Generally speaking, it is a good idea to begin each paragraph with a topic sentence. In this sentence, the main thematic concern of the paragraph is clearly and unambiguously stated. Following this practice will enable you to communicate your ideas more effectively to your reader: the topic sentence allows the reader to discover the main purpose of the paragraph quickly, and enables him or her to retain it in his or her mind as he or she is following your argument.

Please consider the following excerpt from William Strunk's *The Elements of Style*. It offers an example of a well-structured paragraph of argumentative writing, as well as Strunk's commentary identifying its various structural components. Keep in mind that this is *only one possible way* of structuring a paragraph. *The important thing to note is that each of the elements stands in a direct relation to the topic sentence.*

1. Now, to be properly enjoyed, a walking tour should be gone upon alone.

2. If you go in a company, or even in pairs, it is no longer a walking tour in anything but name; it is something else and more in the nature of a picnic.

3. A walking tour should be gone upon alone, because freedom is of the essence; because you should be able to stop and go on, and follow this way or that, as the freak takes you; and because you must have your own pace, and neither trot alongside a champion walker, nor mince in time with a girl.

4. And you must be open to all impressions and let your thoughts take colour from what you see.

5. You should be as a pipe for any wind to play upon.

6. "I cannot see the wit," says Hazlitt, "of walking and talking at the same time.

7. When I am in the country, I wish to vegetate like the country," which is the gist of all that can be said upon the matter.

8. There should be no cackle of voices at your elbow, to jar on the meditative silence of the morning.

9. And so long as a man is reasoning he cannot surrender himself to that fine intoxication that comes of much motion in the open air, that begins in a sort of dazzle and sluggishness of the brain, and ends in a peace that passes comprehension.
(Stevenson, *Walking Tours*)

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Topic sentence. | 5. The same reason, stated in still another form. |
| 2. The meaning made clearer by denial of the contrary. | 6 – 7. The same reason as stated by Hazlitt. |
| 3. The topic sentence repeated, in abridged form, and supported by three reasons; the meaning of the third (“you must have your own pace”) made clearer by denying the converse. | 8. Repetition, in paraphrase, of the quotation from Hazlitt. |
| 4. A fourth reason, stated in two forms | 9. Final statement of the fourth reason, in language amplified and heightened to form a strong conclusion. |

2) Following Stevenson’s example, compose a paragraph that begins with the following topic sentence: “Under no circumstances whatsoever should one consider going on a walking tour alone.”

Constructing Effective Body Paragraphs

A paragraph is a collection of related sentences dealing with a single topic. This handout breaks the paragraph down into its conceptual and structural components. The conceptual components—**direction**, **movement**, and **bridges**—form the logical makeup of an effective paragraph. The structural elements—**topic sentence**, **transitions**, **evidence**, **analysis**, and **conclusion**—are identifiable parts of strong body paragraphs.

Conceptual Components

Direction – The entire paragraph should push toward proving a single idea. In other words, its analysis should move in one direction toward proving the claim laid out in the topic sentence. If it begins with one focus or major point for discussion, it should not end with another or wander within different ideas.

Movement – It is useful to envision body paragraphs as links in the chain of reasoning that forms the overall argument of your essay. In order to get to the next link, each paragraph must establish a claim that moves your overall argument one step closer to its ultimate goal (i.e. proving its thesis). Though the topic sentence will announce your paragraph's direction, the movement of your analysis within the paragraph will consist of pushing this claim from being unproven at the outset of the paragraph to logically compelling at the end.

Bridges – Bridges establish the coherence that makes the movement between your ideas easily understandable to the reader. *Logical bridges* ensure that the same idea is carried over from sentence to sentence. *Verbal bridges* use language—repetition of keywords and synonyms, use of transitions, &c.—that makes the logical connections between your ideas clear to your reader.

Structural Components

Topic sentence – The first sentence in a paragraph should clearly announce the thesis of the paragraph (i.e. its direction), the claim that will be supported by the content of the paragraph. Effective topic sentences will often link this local claim back to the overall thesis of the essay.

Transitions – Transitions are verbal bridges that use language to make the logical movement and structure of an essay clear to the reader. The topic sentence will often contain a transition that links the argument of the paragraph to the one made in the previous paragraph. This is most often accomplished by opening the paragraph with a prepositional phrase or by retaining some important language from the previous paragraph. The final sentence of a paragraph may also suggest a logical link to the argument to come. Transitions do not always link adjacent paragraphs. Good writers will refer back to relevant points made several paragraphs earlier. Especially long or complex papers will often contain several sentences (even entire paragraphs) of transitional material summarizing what the essay has sought to establish up to that point.

Evidence – Quotations, examples, data, testimony, &c. should be cited as evidence in support of your paragraph's central claim. In order to avoid generalization, you should strive to use evidence that is as specific as possible. Evidence should be preceded by an introduction to its source and relevance and followed by analysis of its significance to your overall argument.

Analysis – Evidence alone does not make your argument for you. Evidence requires analysis to make it relevant to an argument. Analyzing effectively requires showing or explaining how the evidence you have cited actually supports the larger claims your essay is making, both on the paragraph level and the thesis level. Because analytical sections are the places where your essay does real argumentative work, they should constitute the bulk of your paragraph (and essay).

Conclusion – Like the conclusion to the essay as a whole, the final sentence of a paragraph is a chance to sum up and solidify for your reader that your paragraph has established the claim it set out to. A concluding sentence will revisit the material from the topic sentence, but with an enhanced perspective.

Body Paragraph Analysis

Topic Sentence – The paragraph's opening sentence clearly establishes the claim that will be argued throughout: that Swift undercuts Gulliver's rejection of humanity by using his authorial power to turn the hero of his novel into a comical figure of pity. This topic sentence reproduces the tension at the heart of the essay's thesis that "there is an ironic disconnect between Swift as author and Gulliver as narrator and critic of humankind." The topic sentence also forges a subtle transition. The reference to "Gulliver's negative view of humankind" refers back to the central claim of the previous paragraph.

Transitions (Movement) – The logical movement of this paragraph is announced by the word "devolve" in the topic sentence. As the author presents and analyzes the novelistic evidence of Gulliver's mental unraveling, he makes the logic of his argument clear to his reader through the use of effective transitions. The author inserts sentences and phrases into his paragraph that trace Gulliver's path from disillusionment, to sociopathia, to antisocial pathology. The author's transitions also expose the logic of Swift's changing attitude toward Gulliver. It is worth noting that these transitions are fully integrated into the author's analysis, simultaneously serving as conclusions to one argument as they form introductions to the next. For example, the line "this disillusionment escalates into sociopathia" sums up the section of the author's analysis dealing with Gulliver's disillusionment while introducing the following section that focuses on his sociopathia.

Evidence – Note how the evidence about Gulliver's welcome by his wife is introduced; the author tells the reader what to look for in the evidence—Gulliver's loss of touch with human feelings, values, and priorities—before presenting it. This makes the paper easier to read because the reader is able to assess the adequacy of the evidence while reading it. In addition, the author is careful to present all of the necessary evidence—both the wife's welcome and Gulliver's reaction—before moving on to analysis. Note, in the use of phrases like "odious Animal," how the author is careful to reproduce the specific pieces of Swift's language that will be relevant for his later analysis.

Analysis – The burden on the author to analyze is lightened significantly by what way in which he introduced his evidence. However, he is still careful to reflect analytically on what he has cited. His assessment of "odious Animal" as a "shameful epithet for a loved one" goes beyond simply explicating the obvious meaning of this phrase; he also succinctly relates what the use of the phrase "odious Animal" says about Swift's attitude toward Gulliver. In addition, note how the author's analysis mingles illuminatingly with his presentation of new pieces of evidence. The "pathological withdrawal from human contact" that the author derives from Gulliver's reaction to his wife, is reinforced by the description of Gulliver's proclivity to socialize with his horses.

Conclusion – The author makes sure the reader understands the main argument of the paragraph by restating it before moving on. However, the author does not simply reproduce his initial contention that Swift undermines Gulliver's antihumanism at the end of *Gulliver's Travels*. He pushes his prior claim one step further by turning Swift's rejection of Gulliver into a social commentary. This subtle addition serves as a transition to the following paragraph in which the author discusses Swift's attitude toward human society.

view of humankind by making his hero devolve, in the grip of that view, into an irrational and sadly comic character, unable to appreciate acts of genuine human goodness. Upon leaving the Houyhnhnms at the end of the story, Gulliver's disillusionment with humanity and desire for withdrawal seem, at first, understandable, if not darkly humorous. He wants to find some "small Island uninhabited" in which to isolate himself from human society, "so horrible was the Idea...of returning to live in the Society and under the Government of Yahoos" (248). But this disillusionment escalates to sociopathia. When he returns home to his wife and children, "the Sight of them filled [him] only with Hatred, Disgust, and Contempt; and the more, by reflecting on the near alliance [he] had to them" (253). Just as Gulliver is disgusted with humanity, by this point Swift is clearly disgusted with Gulliver. Once affably curious, after his departure from the Houyhnhnms Gulliver loses touch with natural human feelings, values, and priorities. His wife welcomes him home with love, patience and forbearance, taking him "in her arms and kiss[ing]" him (253). Instead of embracing her in return, Gulliver falls into a "Swoon" for having been touched by such an "odious Animal" (253)—a shameful epithet for a loved one. Rather than trying to integrate himself into human society, Gulliver pathologically withdraws from human contact and spends his time talking to a pair of stable horses (254). Here Swift shows us the danger of an excessive sensitivity to human failings.

Sample Reverse Outline

I. Introduction: As the Greek philosopher Epicurus once noted, “It is not so much our friends’ help that helps us as the confident knowledge that they will help us.” What happens, though, when our friends fail us? Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* condemns friends that fail to meet their obligations to others.

A. **Thesis:** Clerval is the true villain in *Frankenstein*.

B. **Motive:** Although Clerval appears to epitomize the loyal friend, he shirks his responsibilities to Victor, which ultimately causes Victor’s downfall.

C. **Roadmap:** A close reading of the text reveals the many missed opportunities that Clerval has to intervene with Victor and prevent him from pursuing his research.

II. Paragraph #1

A. **Topic Sentence:** If Clerval were a true friend, he would not lie to Victor’s family but would, instead, involve them in the recovery process.

B. **Evidence:** Clerval nurses Victor back to health but conceals Victor’s illness from his family. Clerval, knowing that Victor’s father was old and that Elizabeth would be devastated, “spared them this grief by concealing the extent of my disorder” (43).

C. **Contextualization/orienting:** The deception occurs the morning after Victor has brought the creature to life. Victor suffers from extreme mental distress.

D. **Analysis:** Clerval knowingly deceives Victor’s family, rationalizing his decision by attempting to anticipate their unhappiness. He admits to “concealing” the degree to which Victor suffers, confirming his deceitfulness.

E. **Relevance:** The evidence proves that Clerval is deceitful. If Clerval had confided in Victor’s family, the family may have been able to help capture the creature thereby avoiding future havoc.

III. Paragraph #2

A. **Topic Sentence:** Clerval bears responsibility for Victor’s future behavior because rather than determining the root cause of Victor’s mental anguish Clerval treats the symptoms.

B. **Evidence:** Victor explains, “When I was otherwise quite restored to health, the sight of a chemical instrument would renew all the agony of my nervous symptoms. Henry saw this, and had removed all the apparatus from my view” (48).

C. **Contextualization/orientation:** After Victor recovers from his first bout with illness he brings Clerval to the university.

D. **Analysis:** Henry believes that he is being a good friend by not asking Victor any questions. However, Henry takes the coward's way out. Instead of probing more deeply, he seeks a short term solution.

E. **Relevance:** In this case, Clerval's cowardice has dire consequences. If he had addressed Victor directly, Victor may have confided his troubles thereby minimizing future problems with the creature.

Etc...for ALL of the body paragraphs. You should have a minimum of five body paragraphs.

VII: **Conclusion:** Individuals may treat friendships lightly. *Frankenstein*, however, warns of the potentially fatal consequences of failing to be a dutiful friend.

Lesson Plan: “Line of Argument,” or the Plot of an Argumentative Essay (Brian Chalk)

Lesson objective: An exercise with drafts to help students identify problems (and possibilities!) in their line of argument—that is, in their essay’s sequence of claims. Does each paragraph represent the next logical step in the argument—and can the reader tell what this step is? Is the paragraph explicitly connected to the thesis (for example, its use of key terms)? By doing this exercise, students get a feel for their essay’s “plot.” Another purpose is to help students evaluate the effectiveness of individual paragraphs and the transitions between paragraphs.

Total estimated time: 45-60 min.

Assignment sequence that’s underway: It doesn’t matter, though I usually do this exercise with the drafts of Essay #3.

Work completed in previous classes:

- In a previous class, we’ve done workshops on **paragraphs** and **transitions** between paragraphs. In the workshop on paragraphs, we look at the Focus, Flow, Form, and Function of several paragraphs and also discuss “Janus claims”—that is, a claim, formerly known as a “topic sentence,” made at the beginning of a demonstrative paragraph. Like Janus, the claim looks two ways: back to the thesis it advances and forward to the paragraph it heads. Thus, the Janus claim represents a clear step in the writer’s argument. In the workshop on transitions, we look at repetition of ideas/language and transitional phrases.
- In another previous class, we’ve done an “essay X-ray” of a prize-winning student essay and discussed how the writer makes the line of argument clear and followable.

Work completed before class: Students have written a draft, which they bring to this class.

Sequence of activities:

Part I. Students perform the following operations on their own drafts (10 min.):

- a. Underline the essay’s motive and thesis and label them in the margin.
- b. Underline each paragraph’s claim (if there is one) and label it in the margin.
- c. If a paragraph has no clear claim, determine the focus and write this in the margin.

Part II. With a partner, students do the following (10-15 min. each draft):

- a. Read and discuss the intro, motive, and thesis. Is there a good motive? Is the thesis arguable?
- b. Given the thesis, predict the first 3 steps of the argument.
- c. Discuss the claims made in each of the first three paragraphs. Do they accord with your predictions? Do they explicitly link to the thesis? How could they be improved?
- d. Discuss *one* of the first three paragraphs in terms of Focus, Flow, Form, and Function.
- e. Discuss the transitions into and out of this paragraph. Are they smooth? Are the links obvious?
- f. If you have time, discuss any other problems you’re having with the draft.

Lesson Plan: Structure as Storytelling

(Gita Trelease, Princeton)

Lesson objective: Organizing sources in order to emphasize argument; giving students a new way to think about essay structure .

Total estimated time: 80 minutes or more (can be divided between two classes).

Additional outcomes: Students take another approach to constructing argument (storytelling); they see their research paper as a type of valued work, in this case, like a documentary; and finally, by the end of the third unit, when I do this lesson, my students are tired of revising—this can be an energizing lesson plan since it asks them to think about argument in a different way.

Assignment sequence that is underway: Research paper. In this course, the research paper is basically a text-in-contexts essay.

Work completed before class: Students have completed a draft of the research essay (or not—see “Follow-up,” below).

Step 1 In class, we watch an excerpt from Frieda Lee Mock’s documentary, *Maya Lin: A Strong Clear Vision*. Any documentary that has an argument will work. The section I have chosen focuses on the creation and controversy of Lin’s Vietnam Veterans War Memorial. I ask the students to be aware that a film is a series of small moments or “pieces” linked together to make a whole. These “units” can be as small as a new camera angle or as big as the introduction of new material. I ask my students to write down all the “pieces” they notice as they watch the film (25 minute viewing).

Step 2 We write some of the pieces on the board (all that will fit, in fact). We then talk about how these pieces resemble sources the students are working with in their essays. Because some of the pieces Mock uses include talking heads, students can see expert opinion at work. But because the film is critical of some of these opinions, students also come to see the way in which the documentary complicates the sources it uses to develop its argument (20 min).

Step 3 I ask students to respond to two questions: 1) What is this film about? 2) What story is it telling? These questions prompt a discussion of how Mock uses sources to create a narrative that is like an argument with a thesis and motive. They also allow us to talk about how it is *not*, for example, a story about the Vietnam War. Students also become aware of storytelling strategies—for example, the repetition of certain images—that can be useful when translated into their research essay writing process (15 minutes).

Step 4 To bring the lesson home, I ask students to do some process writing about their own essays:

- 1) What is your essay about?
 - 2) What story are you telling?
 - 3) What are the “pieces” of your story? (make a list)
 - 4) What would the central image of your essay be?
- (10-20 minutes)

Follow-up: Though I usually use this lesson at the end of the research unit as a way of helping students revise the second draft of their essays, you may also use it to help students crystallize their first drafts. In this scenario, I would ask students to bring a preliminary draft as well as typed-up quotations and references from sources they plan to use but haven't. Doing the lesson plan as written above, you could then follow up the next day with the following lesson plan (or do it the same day if you choose a shorter documentary or excerpt). You will need scissors and clear tape for the class.

Step 1 Based on their lists of the “pieces” of their essays done earlier, students tear/cut up the pages of their drafts and the list of excerpts so that each is a piece unto itself. Then I ask them to arrange them so that the pieces now mimic the order in which their story must be told (15 min).

Step 2 In pairs, I ask students to share their work, explain what they did, and test the clarity of their story on their partners. This step allows for students to share their work and, importantly, realize that the excerpts are only connected by tape—that is, more work needs to be done before there is a true draft (10 min).

Step 3 Students label the gaps between excerpts (A,B,C etc) and, on a separate piece of paper, take quick notes on what work needs to be done to make each gap disappear, that is, how will the argument develop around and through the sources. These notes provide continuity between class work and homework and will help them when they draft the essay, most likely their next assignment (10 min).

Lesson Plan: Paragraph Structure (Kerry Walk, Princeton)

Lesson objective: To teach the gentle art of paragraphing.

Total estimated time: 55 min.

Additional outcomes: Practice “diagnosing” weaknesses and revising

Assignment sequence that’s underway: Any!

Work completed before class (optional): Students have recently submitted a draft, copies of which they bring to class for this paragraphing workshop.

FYI: This lesson plan is scaffolded to build from working with the structure of a single paragraph to generalizing about paragraph structure, applying the new knowledge, and then getting students to revise their own writing, using what they’ve learned.

1. Hand out a “paragraph puzzle” envelope to each pair, then instruct them to organize the sentences to restore the paragraph’s structure. Circulate among the pairs while they’re working to give them encouragement, hints, etc. (10 minutes)
2. Hand out the paragraph puzzle solution, then lead a discussion: How did you know the order in which the sentences should go? Hint for your discussion: Start at the beginning of the paragraph (“How did you know the first sentence was the first sentence?”), then work your way to the end. Discuss alternative orders and why the writer may have chosen to order her sentences as she did. (10 minutes)
3. Lead a discussion: What are some of the excellent qualities of the paragraph that we’ve just reconstructed? Hint for your discussion: Use a gimmick to elicit the qualities—every quality begins with an “F.” Record F’s on the blackboard. (15 minutes)
 - **Flow** - how each sentence follows the one before it
 - **Focus** - how the paragraph revolves around a single main idea
 - **Function** - what role the paragraph serves in the essay.
 - ☐ Ask the group what some typical functions are—e.g.:
 - Introductory paragraphs: to introduce a context and posit a thesis
 - Background or Keyterm paragraph: Usually after the intro; to supply background or define a key term or concept
 - Counterargument paragraphs: to entertain arguments of those who might disagree with the thesis
 - Demonstrative paragraph: to provide support for a sub-claim of the thesis
 - Concluding paragraphs: to sum up the argument while also drawing out implications
 - **Form** - how the paragraph is shaped; follows form
 - ☐ Ask the group how paragraphs with different functions will be formed, or organized (e.g. a demonstrative paragraph usually opens with a claim, then provides evidence and analysis of the claim).

4. Hand out the sample paragraph, and read it aloud (or ask someone to read it). Lead a discussion: What is your assessment of this paragraph in terms of the 4 F's? Then ask the group to make suggestions for revision. (10 minutes)
5. (Optional or later class) Ask students, in pairs, to assess one of the paragraphs of their draft (which they would helpfully have brought to class) in terms of the F's. (10 minutes)

Lesson Plan: Clarifying the Logic of the Lens Essay (Joe Wensink)

Lesson objective: To clarify the underlying logic of the lens essay.

Total estimated time: 50 minutes

Additional outcomes: Anticipating the research paper, students will be asked to balance their own idiosyncratic observations and interpretations with what a strict reading through the lens would entail. This question of balance adds to the students' understanding of motive.

Assignment sequence underway: This lesson should come approximately one week before their first draft is due.

Work completed before class: Students have read and digested both their primary source and their lens text. They have completed one pre-draft assignment designed to understand the theoretical lens.

Step 1 (10 min): Outline the four-step approach to a lens essay on the board.

1. Baseline reading of text through theory
2. Twist (motive)—your unique approach that both compliments and complicates the baseline reading
3. Original reading
4. Reflection back on the lens

Step 2 (5 min): Explain the two caveats: (1) that this approach is the logic behind the essay, the form of the essay, and (2) that how far down the four-step approach you go depends upon the expectations of the course. Explain that in UWS we must at least reach step #3.

Step 3 (10 min): Ask students to get into groups in order to generate step one of the fourstep approach, and give them this hint: Characters in the text can be thought of as metonymic, that is, they represent categories and principles of which they are individual examples. List the main characters in the text, and try to assign each one a major principle (one of the four categories along the liberalism—multiculturalism spectrum we have previously identified).

Step 4 (5 min): Have groups report back their conclusions, and identify the implicit identity politics of the text. NOTE: for the television show *Black. White.*, this is a relatively simple process in which the class is likely to come to a consensus fairly quickly. For more complex texts, this step may take up the remainder of class time.

Step 5 (5 min): Brainstorm possible complimentary and complicating perspectives. The television series is explicitly about race, but what peculiar details in the show cannot be accounted for by race alone? If they need prodding, ask them about identity categories other than race.

Step 6 (5 min): After the students generate a list on the board, inform them that you are prepared to give a brief sample “original reading” of the show, using one of two complicating perspectives that they have generated (they will inevitably come up with “class” and “sexuality,” so come prepared to analyze the show in light of these). Let them choose which perspective they would

rather hear (giving them choice lets them know that you are not wedded to one particular perspective, so they should feel free to explore different avenues on their own).

Step 7 (10 min): Perform a very brief reading of the television show. This reading should demonstrate the tension between the theoretical lens and where it may appear to break down, using this break productively to generate new interpretive possibilities. Does the new perspective show the lens to be somehow incomplete? Can we amend the lens, extend its implications, to cover the new contingencies we discovered? If there is time, a brief clip could be shown to illustrate the reading.

Strong Transitions and Quotation Summaries

Strong Transitions

As I have just demonstrated above, Bierce uses exaggeration in his humor in the way described by Bradley, but what, specifically, does Bierce use this exaggerated humor for?

...The American dream is one of acceptance, even notoriety, in the general public.

During the time of Bierce's writing this notoriety and acceptance were focused more on the male half of society as they were the ones influencing it.

As previously established, Bierce makes a character out of the lexicographer who writes *The Devil's Dictionary*, but how, exactly, does he use this character?

As shown above, Bierce uses the character of the cynical lexicographer to deliver a distinctly American exposure of the ways that reality tends to deviate from ideals, but what purpose does his creation of the character to deliver this exposure serve?

Strong Summaries of Quotations

Bierce's un-naturalistic definition of "child" is "an accident to the occurrence of which all the forces and arrangements of nature are specially devised and accurately adapted" (34). To put it simply, according to Bierce, children are mere accidents from people having sexual intercourse with one another.

Fraud, usually deemed an immoral act used by few people to gain status, is recognized for what it is and how widely it has been propagated. It is "the life of commerce, the soul of religion, the bait of courtship, and the basis of political power" (87). Bierce is attacking business, religion, love, and politics, perhaps four of the most idyllic ideas in America.

Introduction & Conclusion

Intro & Conclusions Exercise #1 – Examining Model Intros (Kerry Walk, Princeton)

Ask students to read 4 or 5 excellent student and/or professional introductions. Discuss the attributes of the intros. I usually look for 4 things: a good opener, effective context for what's to come, a compelling question, issue, or problem (i.e. motive), and an arguable thesis. Follow up by workshopping students' draft intros, then having them revise.

Intro & Conclusions Exercise #2 – An Opener Election (Kerry Walk, Princeton)

To sensitize students to the importance of the opener (the first and possibly second sentence of the intro), type up everyone's opener from the draft, have students pick their top five favorites, tally the votes, then discuss the attributes of the winning openers. Follow up by having students revise their own openers. Consider making a hand-out on effective openers from student and/or professional writing on your topic.

An expanded version of this exercise can be found in the lesson plan entitled "Openers and Introductions."

Intro & Conclusions Exercise #3 – Mimicking Opener Structure (Ryan Wepler)

This exercise works best if students have brought their intro paragraphs or rough drafts to class. It works well as a brief exercise on days when students' rough drafts are due. Its best asset is demonstrating how the structure of a strong opener is essential to hooking the reading and effectively introducing the topic of an essay.

1. Assign students to bring their intros or rough drafts to class.
2. Pass out a sample introduction with a opener statement. The sample paragraph below works well for this exercise. Discuss its sentence structure.
3. Once you have a clear model for the structure, ask students to rewrite their own openers in a way that mirrors the sample you have brought to class.
4. Ask students to read their original openers statements and their revisions. Discuss which is more effective.

This exercise usually takes 15-20 minutes. To add complexity, you can bring two or three model openers with different sentence structures (and rhetorical strategies) to class and ask your students to rewrite their openers in several different ways.

Stephanie Li - Love and the Trauma of Resistance in Gayl Jones's Corregidora

Shifting between scenes of nineteenth-century slave life in Brazil and contemporary urban America, Gayl Jones's *Corregidora* examines continuities between the physical enslavement of black women and modern cycles of abuse. Although the *Corregidora* women are subjected to immense violence and exploitation, Jones foregrounds their demand to overcome and commemorate their traumatic history. However, while the slave past is ever present, the novel does not focus on Great Gram's resistance to *Corregidora* during her enslavement to him. Descriptions of her life with him suggest a highly ambiguous relationship that complicates conventional conceptions of resistance, agency, and desire. Great Gram remains living with *Corregidora* well after emancipation and when she eventually flees his plantation, she leaves her daughter behind and becomes even more vulnerable to his perverse cruelties. Martin's question to the elder *Corregidora* women--"How much was hate for *Corregidora* and how much was love" (131)--highlights the troubling intersection between abuse and desire examined in the novel. By exploding the dichotomy between victim and abuser, Jones challenges the notion of any simplistic or singularly directed conception of resistance.

Source: *Callaloo* 29.1 (2006): 131-150

Intro and Conclusions Exercise #4: Opener Fill in the blanks (Ryan Wepler)

In preparation for this exercise students must to bring to class their intro paragraph with the opener removed (or they can write them out in class). I typically complete this exercise either during the class that rough drafts are due or the class before.

This exercise is typically preceded by a brief discussion of Kerry Walk's "Openers" handout on the following page. The directions I give the class are as follows:

1. Pass your opener-less intro three people to the right.
2. Recipients of opener-less intros, write an opener for your peer using one of the strategies from the "Openers" handout.
3. Pass the intro two more people to the right.
4. Recipients write a different opener for your peer using a different strategy from the "Openers" handout.
5. Pass the intro two more people to the right.
6. Recipients, write a title for the paper.
7. Pass it back to its original owner.
8. Briefly discuss the results as a class

Step 2 is the essential step for this exercise; the others are simply added practice. You can alter or skip the later steps according to your needs and time constraints

Intro & Conclusions Exercise #5 – Openers Exercise (Megan Hamilton)

I like Kerry Walk's "Openers" handout but found it kind of dull to just read through it together, so I decided to take out the examples it provides and have students create their own openers for a made-up thesis.

Time: 30 minutes or more, depending on how much time you spend on discussion

I. Discussion

- a. Can you think of an opening line—in any kind of writing at all—that grabbed your attention? What was it that worked about it? What makes you want to read further?
- b. Can you think of any academic essays that open in a way compelling you to read further? [usually, perhaps not surprisingly, the answer is no...]
- c. How could we make this better? Could we take what we like in the openers that we said succeeded and replicate that in our own work?

II. Activity

[I did this by projecting the computer screen and typing our ideas in Word, but it would be just as easy to do it on the board]

- a. I let my students choose between two made-up papers:
 - i. "Stupid is as Stupid Does": Forrest Gump and Revising the American Hero
 - ii. "Something's Rotten at Pride Rock: The Influence of Shakespeare's Hamlet on Disney's Lion King"

[We did Forrest Gump, which was fun but anything you all have in common that ISN'T material for the essay you're writing would work just as well.]

- b. We then go through our ideas and/or the suggestions put forward on the Openers handout [in practice, these are often pretty similar] to suggest different ways to open a paper on our made-up thesis.

III. Workshop

- a. If you do this when they have a draft in hand, you can then have students pass their own introduction to the right, and then write a suggested opener to the paper they received. I repeated this twice more, so that each paper writer ended up with three suggested openers.
- b. Discussion! Any particularly good suggestions? Were there any openers that were already quite good? If so, what made them good?

Intro & Conclusions Exercise #6 – Examining Model Conclusions (Ryan Wepler)

Ask students to read 4 or 5 excellent student and/or professional conclusions. Discuss the attributes of the conclusions. I usually look at three specific elements: the opening sentence, the author's strategy for summarizing his/her argument, and the final implications that the author suggests for the argument. Follow up by workshopping students' draft conclusions, then having them revise.

Teaching Introductions:

I begin by asking what should be included in an introduction. Students will usually come up with a motive and thesis, and to this I add a hook as well as a quick summary of the primary text. Imagine that the essay is in “Write Now”—students who are not familiar with the text will appreciate a brief description. And, this may seem silly, but I remind students that they need to name both the text and author (you’d be shocked at how many introductions have neither). To put it rather crudely, introductions should generally adhere to the following format:

1. Hook
2. Brief summary
3. Motive
4. Thesis

The handout on the next page offers three different ways to open an essay with a hook. If you use this, I recommend tailoring it to the text you’re analyzing. It’s important to emphasize that the sentence following the hook *must* connect the hook to the topic of the essay. This is harder than it sounds!

Finally, I give students a really bad introduction (also included here) that I’ve written, and I have them critique it (again, it is easy to tailor my introduction to the topic of your class). They have a field day. The introduction includes a lot of no nos like clichés (“Although psychology has existed for hundreds of years”) and informal language (“Don’t these patients have a brain?”). It also fails to mention the name of the text and offers an overly broad title. The introduction obviously exaggerates undesirable qualities, but it does make the broader point of what an introduction should strive to achieve.

INTRODUCTIONS

The introduction sets up your paper by identifying for your readers a piece of conventional wisdom (the motive) and then telling them how your text pushes back against that wisdom (your thesis). Your thesis, in other words, is your argument. All introductions should include the name of the text and author and text as well as a 2-3 sentence summary so that anyone reading your paper would be able to understand it. In addition, the most successful introductions open with a hook: something that draws your reader in and makes them want to read more.

Of course there are many ways to begin an introduction, but here are three tried and true methods:

1. Go from the particular to the general by using a quotation or detail from the text.

Example: In his book *Complications*, Atul Gawande tells the story of a woman whose ten children mysteriously died in her care: “One by one, each of the ten children born to Marie Noe, a Philadelphia woman, died” (202).

This kind of opening sentence should be followed by a sentence connecting it to your topic. For example, if my topic explores Gawande’s argument about mystery deaths I may write something like: “Gawande probes a number of mysterious deaths like these to explore the medical processes that doctors undergo when making a diagnosis.”

2. Go from the general to the particular by using a quotation from outside the text (i.e., use the internet).

Example: As Albert Einstein once wrote, “The most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion that stands at the cradle of true art and true science.”

Again, you will need to follow this kind of quotation with a sentence that connects to your topic, i.e., “While Einstein revels in the beauty of the mysterious, surgeon Atul Gawande suggests, in his book *Complications*, that studying the medical processes of diagnosis can offer insights into surgical processes as well.”

3. Open with a current events anecdote that connects to your story. To do this, first identify a theme of your paper that is relevant today. For example, I might try to find something about children with a mystery illness by googling that phrase.

Example: Between August and December of 2014, 107 children in thirty-four states developed a mysterious respiratory illness that left them partially paralyzed. After months of testing, authorities determined that the illness was caused by the enterovirus, which is a close relative of polio. Similarly, in *Complications* by surgeon Atul Gawande, Gawande probes a number of mystery illnesses to draw conclusions about the surgical process.

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY: INTRODUCTIONS

Medical Mysteries

Although psychology has existed for hundreds of years, it still has numerous controversies about medical mysteries that are debated today. We all know that it is difficult to diagnose cases.

Sometimes doctors are incompetent, and other times they're just plain stupid. Perhaps part of the problem is that patients are so dumb that they can't think for themselves. Don't these patients have a brain? And anyhow, what makes a true medical mystery? Throughout the ages, many famous people have tried to answer this very question, and there have been many disagreements. Gawande thinks that we should study mysterious illnesses very closely. Logically, diagnosing a person's mystery illness only helps them get better. However, a close reading of the book suggests that studying the processes by which mystery illnesses are diagnosed leads to insights about how to improve surgical processes as well.

Openers

Open with a pithy quotation:

Polonius. *This is too long.*

Hamlet. *It shall be to the barber's with your beard.*

With this injection of humor, Shakespeare interrupts the high and epic-versed drama of the death of Priam. And although this cut at Polonius is bound to excite some laughter in the audience, it is also undoubtedly bound to arouse a sense of guilt as well.

"O, from this time forth / My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth" (IV.iv.66). With this proclamation at the end of his last soliloquy, Hamlet deceives himself, along with his readers, into thinking that he is ready to act upon his revenge.

Open with an illustrative quotation:

Wishing happiness to Hamlet and Ophelia, Gertrude proposes a toast "To both your honors" (III.i.42). Making a promise to the king, Polonius swears, "Upon my honor" (II.ii.390). Honor, as a guiding principle in life, is so ingrained in the minds of the characters of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* that it forms part of their everyday speech, much as today we reveal our values through such casual expressions as "To your health" and "I swear on my life."

Open with a surprising fact or clever observation:

Shakespeare might today be called a plagiarist.

"Hamlet" is among an actor's most coveted roles. In the nineteenth century, several actresses took a turn as the tormented Prince of Denmark, perhaps most famously a one-legged bald woman, who was (not surprisingly) panned by the critics.

Open with a relevant anecdote:

A king is reported to have died while sleeping in his garden; his brother marries his widow and ascends his throne. So begins the tragedy of *Hamlet*, Shakespeare's longest, greatest, and most critically contested plays.

Open by defining a key term:

The term "hero" customarily brings to mind romanticized visions of swashbuckling individuals who act quickly and adeptly in any given crisis.

Open with a question:

Why does Hamlet, who claims to have "cause, and will, and strength, and means" (IV.iv.45), delay taking vengeance on his father's murderer?

Open with an overview that's relevant to the essay's argument:

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* lays out in dramatic detail the tragic consequences of the battle between human desire and human will: Hamlet's desire to avenge the death of his father contrasts with his inability to muster the force of will necessary to perform the act.

Open by setting the scene in a dramatic fashion (use sparingly!):

A King sits upon a throne, using his power to make all of his desires reality, using his power to govern the land that he has been given, using his power to crush the now hopeless opposition. Rarely is anyone, in any circumstance, given the opportunity to view a king without all the regalia, as a human being with true emotions, motives, and desires.

Opener Strategies

Of course there are many ways to begin an introduction, but here are a few tried and true methods:

1. Go from the particular to the general (i.e. use a quotation or detail from the text).

Example: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* begins with a lament from the Satan of *Paradise Lost*: "Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay to mould Me man?" The creature echoes this lament through much of the text as he compares himself to the biblical Adam.

2. Go from the general to the particular by using a documented source.

Example: In his book "How to Raise your Child," Dr. Spock cautions against neglecting infants because such neglect often leads to withdrawn and violent behaviors in adults. Victor Frankenstein, of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, would have benefited from this advice. Has he heeded Dr. Spock Victor's creature may have turned out as an upstanding citizen in Geneva rather than a murderous villain.

3. Go from the general to the particular by using a quotation from a known source. I recommend going to google and typing "quotes" and the theme of your essay, such as "parenting" or "friendship."

Example: As the Greek philosopher Epicurus once noted, "It is not so much our friends' help that helps us as the confident knowledge that they will help us." What happens, though, when our friends fail us? Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* condemns friends that fail to meet their obligations to others.

Writing Successful Introductory Paragraphs

In the most abstract sense, the function of an introductory paragraph is to move the reader from the world of daily life into the textual and analytical space of an essay. In a more concrete sense, an introduction performs three essential functions: 1) it clearly and specifically states the topic or question that you will address in your essay; 2) it motivates topic or question that the essay will examine; and 3) it states, clearly and directly, your position on this topic or question (i.e. your thesis).

Conceptual Components

Persona – While reading your introduction, your reader will begin to make assumptions about you as an author. Be sure to project yourself as a thoughtful, knowledgeable, and nonbiased writer capable of dealing effectively with the complexities and nuances of your topic. Your introduction should set the tone that will remain consistent throughout your essay. In addition to emphasizing the uniqueness of your approach to your subject matter, you should seek to draw your reader into your essay with the gracefulness of your prose and the rational demeanor you project as a writer.

Contextualization – In addition to stating the topic and scope of your analysis, your introduction should provide your readers with any background or context necessary to understand how your argument fits into the larger discourse on the subject. The details you use to orient your reader with your topic should be woven throughout the structural components of your introduction listed below.

Structural Components

Opener – In addition to grabbing the reader's attention, the opening sentence of an essay sets up the structure of the introductory paragraph. You want to create movement among your ideas, which is best done by moving either from the particular to the general or from the general to the particular. Essays which move from the particular to the general often begin with an anecdote, quotation, fact, or detail from the text that can be used to introduce readers to the larger issues the essay will address. Introductions that move from the general to the particular—typically referred to as the funnel structure—often begin with a wider view of the topic that will be used to establish a context for the more localized argument that the author will present.

Topic or Purpose – The introductory paragraph must leave the reader with a clear understanding of the specific subject area that your essay will investigate. Defining your essay's scope in this way often requires distinguishing your specific focus from the larger discourse on your topic. Though this is not always essential, many essays include a *purpose statement* that tells the reader directly: "this paper examines..." or "the aim of this essay is to..."

Motive – The motive is a specific sentence, usually near the middle of your introduction, that clarifies for the reader why your thesis is interesting, non-obvious, and/or contestable. In essence, your motive answers the question "so what?" that a reader might ask of your thesis. Because they show that the truth about a subject is not as clear as it might seem, motive statements often employ terms of reversal—"yet," "but," "however," &c.—that reflect a departure from the obvious.

Thesis Statement – The thesis statement is the central claim your essay will make about your chosen topic. Since the topic area must first be described and motivated, the thesis statement is usually placed near the end of the introduction.

Roadmap – Though this is often unnecessary in shorter papers, essays that are long (7+ pages) or especially complex are often easier for the reader to understand if the author offers some preview of the essay's structure at the beginning of the paper. In especially long essays (20+ pages), this outline of the essay's structure may demand a paragraph of its own (usually the second paragraph).

Introduction Analysis

Motive – This essay is given its motive as a result of the author's claim that there is a lot more to Joyce's presentation of Dublin than is evident in an initial reading of *Dubliners*. Implicitly, the author is telling her readers that they should continue reading her essay in order to be shown things about the novel's rendering of Dublin that they would not otherwise have seen. The goal of the essay then becomes to fulfill this promise made to the reader. Note how the motive's placement in the introduction is related directly to the paragraph's structure: after presenting a more narrow and obvious reading of *Dubliners* in the opening sentences, the author inserts the motive in order to describe how her essay broadens the scope of this reading in a less obvious way that she elaborates on in the rest of the introduction.

Topic or Purpose – The author very specifically states her topic—Joyce's Dublin as a "locale for a drama...about home"—in order to clarify the scope of the essay for her readers. The purpose of her essay will be to explore and arrive at some conclusion about this topic. Again, note that the author's placement of the novel's topic relates directly to the structure she has chosen for her introduction: immediately after the motive in which the author informs the reader that she will not pursue a more obvious ethnographic investigation of Joyce's Dublin, she tells the reader clearly and directly what topic her essay will explore. Because it is essential to clearly define an essay's topic before presenting a thesis about it, the topic statement also precedes the thesis statement.

Thesis Statement – The author's thesis statement is particularly strong because it pursues a tension in the novel by examining the way in which Joyce's attitude toward home pushes in two directions. It has Joyce simultaneously indicting and showing compassion for different aspects of home in *Dubliners*. As in most college essays, the thesis statement comes toward the end of the introduction. Again, note the way in which the placement of the thesis statement fits into the overall structure of the introduction: the author motivates and clearly defines her topic before offering her thesis about it. Giving the reader a clear understanding of the topic to be explored in an essay (as this author does) is essential for the formulation of a thesis statement with this sort of tension and double-edged complexity.

Opener – This introduction proceeds from the particular to the general (it is also common to proceed from the general to the particular), beginning with a quotation before moving on to more large-scale issues. It is important to note that, while the opening quotation sets up this structure, it is reinforced by the author's movement from an initial discussion of Joyce's ethnographic rendering of Dublin itself to a broader discussion of Dublin's more universal significance as a site of home (the topic of the essay). Structuring your introduction in this way—"particular to general" or "general to particular"—ensures movement among your ideas and creates interest for the reader by suggesting a similar movement of ideas in the essay as a whole.

"one knows everyone else's business" (65). This is Doran's lament, one of many such laments in *Dubliners*, a book whose very title seems to presage a comprehensive portrait of Ireland's capital city. Joyce makes full use of the advantages Dublin offers as a setting. Both national capital and provincial town, the city was the ideal site for cutting—and often scathing—dissections of this land. It would be unfortunate, however, to see *Dubliners* merely as an ethnographic study, for Joyce's commentary has a broader scope. Dublin comes to serve as a locale for a drama which is played out all over the world, a drama about home. Joyce studies the nature of home, what it is, and what it means to leave it. However different his characters may be, together they form a tableau which, while it does much to indict the idea of home, also shows a deep compassion for those who are bound to it. Although this theme may be examined in many stories—the failed attempt at leaving in "Eveline" is an obvious example—a look at two less obvious works, "The Boarding House" and "Little Cloud," may best suggest its subtlety and pervasiveness.

Roadmap – While this author's roadmap falls a bit short of the brief outline of an essay's structure that is often found in the introductions of longer college essays, she does give the reader an indication of the argumentative path the body of her essay will follow. In addition, indicating that she has limited herself to an examination of two of the novel's fifteen stories further clarifies the essay's scope, and the reference to these works as "less obvious" enhances her motive.

It's a Wrap! Writing Effective Conclusions

Conclusions are critical for any essay's success. They provide your last opportunity for persuasion, for argument, for kicking your thesis home. They need to provide closure – to convey a sense of completeness – yet they should also leave readers thinking about your points. Conclusions can do this by illustrating the lingering possibilities of the topic, its larger (or modern, or real-life) implications, your essay's true meaning or “so what?” Like the introduction, the conclusion is propelled by your motive in writing the essay – but rather than giving readers reason to read, the conclusion shapes their memory of your words once the essay is done. Often, the conclusion divides the distinguished from the undistinguished essay: the one readers will remember from the one readers will forget. As such, it should not simply restate your thesis or voice a vague, general point. It needs to make a lasting impression.

Different things an effective conclusion can do:

- Create a “bookend” with the introduction by revisiting an image or anecdote raised in the first paragraph. How do we then “read” this image, or understand this anecdote, in light of the evidence your essay has presented? This is also called “putting a human face on the problem,” and is a common strategy in journalism. For example, imagine you begin an essay on Kent State by looking at John Filo's photograph (“Pieta”) of the dead student in the parking lot. After stating your thesis, you investigate the events of Kent State from a particular angle. In your conclusion, you return to the photo and look at it once more. What new angle has your evidence provided? Bring your essay full circle – with a twist.
- Redefine your argument, particularly if your introduction asked a question or raised a “key term” that your essay examined. This is much like the previous example, but in this case the “bookend” is intellectual rather than personal or visual. For example, imagine your essay begins by questioning the stereotype of the Vietnamese civilian as an agent of the Vietcong. You have just spent several pages enriching or complicating that perception. In your conclusion, you could revisit the original question and place a new spin on it. Does this mean American perceptions are wrong? Is there some kind of culpability at work? Why does this matter? What is the greater issue here? This is much like the next type of conclusion: the “greater implication” ending.
- Conclude by considering the implications of your argument. How does your analysis matter in the context of history, politics, science, literature, or other discipline in which the essay is written? Be sure, when writing this type of paragraph, to keep it specific. Suppose, for example, you have written an essay about the genocide that took place in Cambodia because of Pol Pot. Surely, this topic has real-world implications. What can we learn from these events? Why do they matter? What is the “so what?” factor to this paper? Suppose, too, that your essay considered the “tolerance” other countries gave to Pol Pot, the blind eye the world community turned on his atrocities. What can we learn from this? What implications does this have for diplomacy in the future? Why did we ignore what transpired? Similarly, imagine you have written an essay about the differing perceptions of the jungle in Vietnamese and American literature about the war. At first glance, this topic may not seem

to have the “greater implications” of a paper on Pol Pot. But if you think about it, the American fear of the landscape can be blamed to some degree for our use of defoliants, while the Vietnamese bond with the landscape led to the creation of tunnel warfare: digging into the very earth for protection. Most topics about the Vietnam War will have some kind of real-life implications, and one technique you can use in your conclusion is to exploit them.

- Conclude with a quotation from or reference to a source that amplifies your thesis and perhaps puts it in a new perspective. Be careful with this one: it’s tricky. You don’t want to end solely with someone else’s words – and you don’t want to introduce new, unrelated material -- but this strategy can provide a means of complicating your essay, of putting a new spin on your topic. For example, an essay that has examined patriotism among Vietnamese soldiers could end with a quotation from Ho Chi Minh (which you then analyze) that illuminates your own reading of patriotism among North Vietnamese troops. Or you might end with facts about troops’ patriotism from a nonfiction source without quoting directly. This is different from putting your entire essay into context, from placing a creative work into its historical frame. Instead, it’s a broadening device, a means of widening your focus at the very end. This is a method of looking at the “big picture” without making general or sweeping claims.
- End with the questions raised by your paper. This, too, is tricky. It’s the “inconclusive conclusion”: the conclusion that illuminates the questions raised by your work without necessarily answering them, often because there are no easy answers. This can be a powerful way to leave your readers thinking, but it can also come across as apologetic or annoying. It works best in papers that analyze some moral issue (what is truth? what is justice? what is honorable in war?) because these type of questions often do not have answers. It works least well for essays that point toward an obvious conclusion because essays that are strongly persuasive don’t leave these doors open. For this reason, a paper that explores why the world community did nothing about Pol Pot – why the atrocities in fact took place – might be able to end with some provocative questions. But a paper that analyzes Jimi Hendrix’s status as an anti-war icon would need a different type of conclusion, perhaps an anecdote or a quotation.

Effective conclusions also end with a “kicker”: a simple sentence, often composed of one-syllable words or structured in a parallel fashion, that “kicks” your point home. Sometimes, this kicker is a quotation from another writer, but more often the “kicker” is composed of your own words, your own commentary on the quotation (if you use one) or the anecdote or the implications discussed in this last paragraph. The reason the “kicker” is important is because the final line of your essay, like the first one, generates interest for your topic. Done well, it will leave your reader thinking and create a good impression. Short sentences have punch; long sentences belabor the point, dragging and trailing as they attempt to remake the essay in the last few words, gasping their way to the finale as this sentence is doing because the writer obviously isn’t sure what to do and isn’t happy about the conclusion and so tries to say everything again all at once. Don’t do this.

Other don’ts for the conclusion:

- Don't restate the thesis in so many words.
- Don't repeat the language of the assignment, particularly if it was not part of your essay.
- Don't apologize for your paper or your claims.
- Don't engage in platitudes or generalizations.
- Don't introduce completely new material. The conclusion shouldn't look like a body paragraph.
- Don't refute the claims you have made. The counter-argument does not belong in this paragraph.
- Don't belabor the same point in six sentences. Have something worthwhile to say.

Ultimately, you should devote as much time to writing your conclusion as you do to crafting your introduction. It is one of the set pieces of your argument, and the impression your conclusion makes will last long after your readers forget the middle of your essay. In real-world terms, you should realize, too, that lazy readers often skip to the conclusion when they get bored or frustrated. They look for the "so what?" This could happen to you. For this reason, your conclusion needs to have snap, or purpose. Use it to end your essay with a bang.

Writing Effective Conclusions

Though the final paragraph in an essay is commonly referred to as the conclusion, it is not traditionally the place in which the author draws new conclusions that were not mentioned previously in the essay. Rather, the goal of an essay's conclusion is to bring the paper full circle by revisiting the large-scale ideas stated in the introduction, but with the refined perspective created by the preceding arguments in the body of the paper. Conclusions often return to the thesis—which the preceding essay has attempted to make compelling—in an attempt to briefly assess its significance in some larger context.

Conceptual Components

Revisiting the Thesis – Just as the preceding body paragraphs attempted to draw more general conclusions from specific pieces of evidence, the concluding paragraph of an essay reestablishes the essay's overall argument using the more specific claims argued in the body. Though the thesis is generally reintroduced the first sentence in the conclusion, the remainder of the paragraph should be used to ensure that this return to the thesis moves beyond simply reproducing the introduction.

Recontextualization – Just as your introduction acts as a bridge that transports your readers from their own lives into the textual space of your analysis, your conclusion provides a bridge to help your readers make the transition back to their daily lives. This is done most effectively by emphasizing a context for your ideas that makes them relevant or meaningful for your reader. In some cases, this context may be different from the one established in your conclusion, and it may push slightly beyond the boundaries of the writing prompt.

Structural Components

Evolved Thesis – Many strong conclusions restate the thesis—in different language from the introduction—in the opening sentence. This allows the concluding paragraph to establish something more than the introduction in which the thesis is usually stated near the end. Restating the paper's overall argument at the beginning of the conclusion allows for a brief exploration of your essay's context or broader implications in the final paragraph.

Motive (with a twist) – In guiding your readers out of the textual space of your paper, it is important to remind them why your arguments are significant. You don't want your readers to finish your paper thinking "so what?" To prevent this, use your conclusion to reestablish the relevance of your thesis.

Limitations – Acknowledging the limitations of your argument, while optional, can be an effective way of clarifying the scope of your thesis, particularly in an essay whose claims are rather ambitious. Acknowledging that there are questions that need further research or that your argument is unlikely to convince those who approach the topic with a different set of assumptions is also a useful strategy for bolstering your credibility.

Look Ahead – Because an essay is but a small part of a larger discourse on its topic, it is important to describe how your conclusion may serve as a stepping stone for further research. Implicitly you are saying, "Now that I have proven the thesis of my essay, what new questions can we ask about this topic?" In a way, looking ahead to a new question does the work of the three previous components: proposing new areas of inquiry reinforces that you have proven your *thesis*; showing that, with further research, your claims could have broader implications *remotivates* your argument; acknowledging that other questions still remain acknowledges the *limitations* of your central claim.

Final thought – Since it is the last thing they will read, you want your final sentence to stick in your readers' minds. Whether you choose to end with emphasis, wit, or wonder, your final sentence should be in some way memorable without departing significantly from the overall tone of your essay.

Conclusion Analysis

Evolved Thesis – The opening sentence of the conclusion restates the essay's thesis that "homosexuality has occupied positions both inside and outside the capitalist system" but that "a common element throughout this dynamic relationship...is the capitalist control of homosexuality and homosexuals in increasingly insidious ways." It also reestablishes the tension inherent in this thesis between the shifting *function* of homosexuals within capitalism and their static *position* within the system. The opening sentence also effectively sums up the essay by using terms—"nuisance," "industrial capitalism," "tool," "late capitalism"—that have been given specialized meanings within the body of the paper. Restating the thesis in the opening sentence of the conclusion allows the author a chance to explore the essay's broader implications, as he does in the sentences that follow.

Limitation – While this statement is more of a concession to his opposition than an acknowledgement of an argumentative limitation, the admission that progress towards tolerance has been made by working within the capitalist system works against the author's overall claim that capitalism itself must be opposed. This bolsters the author's credibility by showing his reader that, though he has ultimately rejected them, he has genuinely considered opposing viewpoints.

Motive (with a twist) – The motive of the conclusion takes the same form as the one the author employs in the introduction to his essay: the truth is not what it would appear to be on a first reading. However, the motives in the intro and conclusion differ significantly in function. In the introduction, the author argues that, "contrary to what a quick stroll through the GAP or five minutes of watching *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* would tell you about homosexuality's exalted status in modern consumer culture, the history of the relationship between homosexuality and the capitalist mode of production has been a complex and troubled one." The motive in the introduction ushers the reader into the world of the text by motivating an issue of *interpretation*. The motive in the conclusion ushers the reader back into the world of daily life by motivating an issue of *political action*, which is the overall goal of the essay. This incitement to action derives from the author's claim that, though it may seem that homosexuals are making progress towards tolerance by working within the system of capitalism, the only way to truly achieve tolerance is by resisting capitalism itself.

Look Ahead – While the author does not pose a new question directly, he suggests a further realm of inquiry. Having established in his essay that homosexuals cannot achieve tolerance by working within the system of capitalism, he looks to the next logical set of questions which require an examination of *how* to most effectively resist capitalism. While the author does devote some space in the latter part of his essay to sketching out some possibilities, these ideas are not nearly as fully realized as the argument about the impossibility of full tolerance of homosexuals within capitalism. Thus, this new question is also an implicit acknowledgement of a limitation in the author's previous arguments.

within American capitalism has evolved from *nuisance* under industrial capitalism to *tool* of late capitalism, the interests of capital have always in some way been in opposition to those of the gay community. While, admittedly, progress has been made in the realm of tolerance, it has not been enough; capital has simply found new and more insidious ways to manipulate, marginalize, and oppress homosexuals. If America's gays and lesbians desire liberation and authenticity, then they must align themselves with the enemies of capitalism and employ new theories and strategies in their struggle. The American gay community has nothing to lose but their overpriced Diesel jeans. They have a world to win.

Final thought – The author's reference to the "overpriced Diesel jeans" functions as more than a sort of witty gimmick. As the author moves the reader from the highly theoretical arguments that comprise the majority of his essay into the real world of the reader's daily life, he chooses to focus on an object from that world. In addition, the reference to giving up Diesel jeans is juxtaposed with the idea that homosexuals have "a world to win" through resistance to capitalism. When placed in these terms, the sacrifice of the material object seems pithy in comparison with the toleration that the author argues homosexuals stand to achieve by aligning themselves against capitalism.

Lesson Plan: Introductions & Revising for Thesis & Motive (Soo La Kim, Princeton)

Lesson objective: For students to understand the function of introductions and to understand revision as more than editing or “tweaking” a finished product.

Total estimated time: 55-60 minutes

Additional outcomes: Students continue learning how to identify elements such as thesis, motive, and orienting and learn to turn a critical eye toward their own writing. In looking at a draft & revision of a sample student essay, they also see the concrete differences that a strong thesis & motive make in giving an essay focus & direction. This exercise also serves as a warm-up for the draft workshop that is to come.

Assignment that is underway: I do this for Essay #1, but it can also work for Essay #2.

Work completed before class: Students have written the draft of essay #1 for class, and they bring a copy of their essay to class. They have already been introduced to the “Elements of the Academic Essay” and have done the “Elements Exercise” in the previous class.

Step 1: I give students the introductory paragraphs of a sample essay in the draft and revised versions (see below). I ask students to read the two versions and then freewrite for 3 minutes on what they notice, both differences and similarities. (10 min.)

Step 2: We discuss what happened between the draft and revision. I ask, “What do you notice about the structure and order of information?” “How many sentences has the writer kept from the draft?” I point out that the writer could not have gotten to the clearer articulation of her ideas without having written the draft first (this comment may not really register with them at this point, but I bring it up again in draft conferences, especially when students are dismayed at having to “start over.”) (10 min.)

Step 3: I distribute a hand-out on Introductions from *The Craft of Research*, which shows that the function of all introductions is to pose a problem, offer a provisional response to that problem, and provide the necessary context for understanding the problem and response. As we go over the hand-out, I get them to see that Context, Problem, and Response are analogous to Orienting, Motive, and Thesis. We locate the three elements in the draft & revision of the sample, and point out the proportions of each. It should be clear that the draft version has too much summary, without a clear sense of the problem or question. (*Note:* To streamline the lesson, I can also omit the hand-out, and just lead a discussion about the function of introductions, extrapolating from the student example. The main goal here is to get students to see that introductions do have specific functions different from the body of the essay, and that as writers, they have to think about what their readers need to know.)

Step 4: I divide students into groups of 3. They read the intro paragraphs of each other’s drafts and label context, problem, and response (orienting, motive, thesis). I ask them to evaluate these elements—is there too much context? Is there a clear problem? If not, can you infer the problem

from the response? Is there a clear response or is it vague or mere summary? They comment directly on the drafts. (10-15 min.)

Step 5: Students now look at their own drafts and the feedback they've received. I then ask, "where in the essay besides your intro do you feel you have the strongest statement of your main point?" (hint: check conclusion). I ask them to write out on a separate piece of paper what they think their problem/motive is and what their response/thesis is. I ask them to look at the information they provide in their intros—what contextual information is necessary to understand the problem/response and what is extraneous? (Here, I might point out that intros usually name the author and title of the work that the essay will discuss.) Then, students rewrite their intros to clarify their problem & response. (10-15 min.)

Step 6: Finally, I ask students to freewrite about what they learned about their draft. (2 min.)

SAMPLE DRAFT INTRODUCTION OF ESSAY #1

Slow Down and See

The ideal Christmas story involves the exchange of an unexpected gift: the bell in Chris van Allsburg's The Polar Express, money for the impoverished family in Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol. In the stories we imagine that these gifts are given without any self-interest from the giver; the giver expects nothing in return. Yet according to Marcel Mauss, who studied gifts in archaic societies and wrote about these exchanges in *The Gift*, every gift must be reciprocated. Mauss established three stages involved in a gift: the giving, the receiving, and the giving back. Every receiver feels the obligation to reciprocate the gift he receives. After observing several civilizations Mauss notes that "exchanges and contracts take place in the form of presents; in theory these are voluntary, in reality they are given and reciprocated obligatorily." (3). Even the sentimental, heart-warming Christmas gift comes chained with a burden: the gift compels the receiver to reciprocate.

The author Paul Auster brings us a Christmas story entitled "Auggie Wren's Christmas Story" in which the gifts hover in the background, less obvious than the reindeer bell or bags of money. The story reads in two different sections: the outside frame telling of Auggie Wren's and the narrator's current relationship, and the inside story of Auggie Wren's visit to Granny Ethel on Christmas day many years before. The outer frame begins with the narrator describing his frequent visits to a cigar store where Auggie Wren works behind the counter. The two don't notice each other much until one day Auggie discovers that the narrator is a writer. Auggie befriends the narrator and takes him to see his life work: twelve photo albums filled with the same picture. As the narrator flips through the albums he notices that each picture differs slightly from the others. He

learns that Auggie takes a picture every morning in the same spot: he catalogues the passing of time on a street corner. The inner story is told by Auggie: he recounts to the narrator how he got the camera that he uses to take his daily photograph. When Auggie finishes his story by saying that he took the camera and left Granny Ethel's, we feel dissatisfied. The end of Auggie's story sounds hollow and lacking, not at all like the cozy kitchen and fig pudding Christmas story we expect. The narrator expresses this sense of lacking when he asks Auggie, "Did you ever go back to see her?" (19). This question embodies the reason for the hollow ending to Auggie's story. In other words the narrator is asking "Did you ever reciprocate for the gift Granny gave you?" Mauss identified this feeling of obligation in archaic societies and this same obligation to reciprocate dominates Paul Auster's short story. Auggie's story lacks this necessary reciprocity; he needs to give something back to Granny. The struggle to reciprocate dictates Auggie's actions in Auster's short story.

SAMPLE REVISED INTRODUCTION OF ESSAY #1:

Slow Down and See

Sometimes a person who is blind can see more clearly than a person who is not blind. In Paul Auster's short story "Auggie Wren's Christmas story", the blind Granny Ethel is such a person. Though she does not physically see, she possesses true sight: the ability to see the subtleties and to discover the deeper parts of a person. In Christmas stories we expect to hear of a gift exchange and this story is no exception. Granny Ethel gives Auggie Wren this special sight. The short story reads in two different sections: the outside frame telling of Auggie Wren's and the narrator's current relationship, and the inside story of Auggie Wren's visit to Granny Ethel on Christmas day many years before. Auggie finishes his story by saying, "I put her grandson's wallet on the table, picked up the camera again, and walked out of the apartment" (19). The reader wonders, is this all there is to Auggie's story? The ending sounds hollow and lacking, not at all like the cozy kitchen and fig pudding Christmas story we expect. The narrator voices this feeling of incompleteness when he asks Auggie: "Did you ever go back to see her?" (19). In other words, what happened next? Yet only a few paragraphs later, Auster's short story draws to a close and we *do* feel a sense of resolution. How did the outer story resolve the story within a story?

Gift exchange is not one sided. Marcel Mauss, whose work The Gift describes his observations of gift exchange in archaic societies, argues that every gift must be reciprocated. Mauss establishes three stages involved in a gift: the giving, the receiving, and the giving back. After observing several civilizations Mauss notes that "exchanges and contracts take place in the form of

presents; in theory these are voluntary, in reality they are given and reciprocated obligatorily”(3). Every receiver feels the obligation to reciprocate the gift he receives. Thus a complete Christmas story involves the giving and giving back of a gift. Auggie’s story is unresolved because he received without reciprocating. His story lacks the essential third component of Mauss’s theory on gifts: the obligation to give back. The resolution comes when he has successfully reciprocated. The story becomes complete because it involves the giving and the giving back. Though she is blind, Granny Ethel gives Auggie the gift of sight and then Auggie struggles to reciprocate for it.

Lesson Plan: Introductions

Lesson objective: To help students write more effective introductions— specifically, intros that don't funnel but instead provide context, motive, and thesis.

Total estimated time: 70 minutes

Additional outcomes: Students get more experience assessing motive and thesis and giving each other useful feedback.

Assignment sequence that's underway: Could be any. I do the first part of this plan in Unit #1 and the second in Unit #2. I've combined the two parts here for convenience's sake.

Work completed before class: Students have written and handed in drafts. For this workshop, students read the following:

- the "Introductions" chapter from Wayne Booth et al.'s *Craft of Research*,
- all of their classmates' draft openers (usually the first sentence of the draft—I type these up), and
- 3 of their classmates' introductions (usually the first 1-3 paragraphs), which I've chosen.

Before class, students e-mail me a list of their 3 favorite openers. I also ask them to bring a copy of their own drafts to class.

Part One:

Step 1: I tell students which openers received the most votes. We discuss the qualities that made these openers so appealing. (10 min.)

Step 2: I give students a hand-out on openers (attached), which we go over together. (10 min.)

Step 3: I ask students to use one of the opening strategies they've encountered in class to revise their own opener. (5 min.)

Step 4: Students share their revised openers. (5 min.)

Part Two (could be done in a different class session or different course unit):

Step 1: We discuss the parts of an introduction as presented by Booth et al. These parts boil down to "context," "motive," and "thesis." Booth et al. also call "motive" the "problem" or "disruption" of a text. Accordingly, the thesis is the "solution" or "resolution." (10 min.)

Step 2: We discuss the three introductions in terms of context, motive, and thesis, and give the writers advice on how to revise. (15 min.)

Step 3: Students exchange their introductions in groups of 2 or 3, then repeat Step 2 above. (10 min.)

Step 4: If time, students work solo on revising their introductions. (5 min.)

Step 5: The class comes together for a discussion of how context, motive, and thesis need to be connected to one another. (5 min.)

Lesson Plan: Openers, Revisions, and Introduction Critique

(Jeremy Spindler)

This exercise involves critiquing openers, seeing how the effectiveness of an opener can change in context, some small examples of revision, and concludes with a general critique of one or more introductions.

Time: 30-50 minutes (depends on how many openers/intros you include)

Prep Work

Note: The preparation for this exercise will work best when you have both the rough and final drafts of student essays in your possession. This can be done at the end of the semester when you have portfolios, in which you can save the list for next semester, or you may put this together during Unit 1 in preparation for Unit 2.

1. Make a list of openers from several different essays. Lump the opener from the student's rough draft along with the opener from the final draft (if they revised the opener), but do not label which is which. In other words do not consistently write the rough draft's opener first, but mix the order up instead.
2. Do the same thing for 2 or 3 entire introductions. It would be best to include both the draft and final versions of the introductions.

Lesson Plan

PART ONE

1. Discuss the various types of openers from the "openers" handout by Kerry Walk.
2. Hand out the sheet with the *openers* from student essays only. Have them do the following:
 - A. Identify the type of opener (this is not crucial, but it can be effective).
 - B. Evaluate the effectiveness of the opener either as a class or in groups.

Note: this can be difficult out of context of the introduction, but have them evaluate it as an isolated entity any way. This will help prove a point later.

 - C. For openers in which there is both a draft and revision have them decide which they think is the draft and which they think is the revision.
 - D. Discuss as a class (if you had them work in groups).
 - E. Reveal which are drafts and which are revisions. If some openers seem weaker after being revised you may point out that it is good to be cautious and aware that sometimes certain revisions may weaken a part or all of an essay. It is good to be critical of your revisions as well as your drafts. Just because something is "revised" does not mean it is automatically better.

PART TWO

1. Now hand out the complete introductions. Have them read through them in groups or as a class and evaluate how the effectiveness of the opener may have changed now that it is in context with the introduction. What made it weaker/stronger?

- A. This helps establish the importance of context, not that most of them will deny that context is important.
- B. The different versions of the essay can once again be used to show the importance revision.

PART THREE

1. Now look at the final versions of the conclusions and do a general critique of the introduction.

- A. Identify thesis, motive, topic sentence, etc.
- B. Does the author orient the reader?
- C. Do we have a strong idea of what the essay will be about?
- D. Is the thesis specific enough? Is it too specific?

Research & Sources

Research Exercise #1 – Bibliography-based Fetch-a-book (Mary George, Princeton)

Step 1 of this exercise is usually completed outside of class. However, if students need more guidance it is usually possible to reserve a room in the library so that this exercise can be completed in class. Instructors can indicate which course readings have especially fruitful bibliographies.

1. Students select a book listed in the bibliography of one of the course readings. They use the Main Catalog to determine whether the Library owns that book and, if so, what its location and call number are. (If the book does not appear in the Main Catalog, select another one that does.) Students browse the books shelved adjacent to the one they have chosen in order to characterize their subject matter. Students charge out a book.
 2. Students bring the books to class. Instructor leads a brief discussion on sources (evaluating types, credibility, relevance, utility, etc).
 3. Instructor could follow this activity up with an exercise on proper citation, or a discussion on using sources as springboards to further research.
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Research Exercise #2 – Main Catalog Keyword Searching (Mary George, Princeton)

This exercise can be completed outside of class, during a class held in the library, or in your classroom if you have your students bring their wireless laptops to class (those who don't have wireless laptops can share).

1. Students make a list of keywords that relate to your writing seminar's theme, readings you have done so far, and/or discussions you have had in class. They should make sure to include synonyms (e.g., teenagers, young people, youth, college students). Student lists keywords, grouped by concept.
2. In the Main Catalog, students search keywords in various combinations, using the Basic Search method (both keyword and relevance keyword) and using the Guided Search method.
3. Students list 2 or 3 sources that seem most interesting, and describe what search path led to each. Hint: Read the relevant search tips, by scrolling to the bottom of the search screen, before you begin.
4. Bonus question: Figure out how to sort your results and eliminate foreign language books from your results. Describe how you did this.
5. Librarians and/or instructor can follow up with individual students as needed.

Research Exercise #3 – Exploring the Library’s Web Page (Mary George, Princeton)

This exercise can be completed outside of class, during a class held in the library, or in your classroom if you have your students bring their wireless laptops to class (those who don’t have wireless laptops can share. You can (and probably should) tailor the questions to your own UWS or to your students’ needs.

1. Go to <http://lts.brandeis.edu> and answer the following questions, describing your procedure:
 - a. What are the hours of this library, and where is it located?
 - b. Which librarian could help you find sources for a UWS on Politics?
 - c. What are the ways you can request assistance from a librarian? What is the address for our “Ask a Librarian” service and what hours does it run?
 - d. List three journals in which you might find articles related to our UWS. Which does the library own in hard copy? Provide online access to?
 - e. Bonus question: Where can you find an example of how to cite a book with more than one author using the MLA documentation style?

Variation #1: This exercise can be completed as group work. Simply divide the class into groups of 3-4 and assign each group one or two questions. After finding the answers, each group will come to the front of the class and teach the class (using the classroom projector) how to complete the task(s) they were assigned.

Research Exercise #4 – Browsing the Stacks (Mary George, Princeton)

This assignment gives students an experience that I consider essential to successful research: searching for books on the stacks themselves rather than in a database. This exercise demonstrates the utility of actually touching books to students who think that they can find anything online.

1. Give students a certain call number area or range that covers a relevant discipline of your course (HM-HX Sociology, e.g.).
2. For homework, ask students to browse the stacks in this area and find and check out an interesting looking book.
3. Have students bring the book to class and explain why it looked interesting.

Variation #1 – Have students complete this assignment in reverse. Ask them to perform keyword searches for books related to your course in order to figure out the call number area or range relevant to your course topic (there may be several possible answers).

Research Exercise #5 – Research in Newspapers (Ryan Wepler)

The Brandeis Library provides access to the historical archives of a wide range of national newspapers. This is one resource I feel would be used much more often by undergraduates if more of them knew it existed. It is especially useful in UWS courses with a historical or cultural studies focus or courses in which a wide range of scholarly sources might not be available for the research paper. Steps 1-3 can be completed outside of class, during a class held in the library, or on wireless laptops students have brought to class (those without wireless laptops can share).

1. Assign the class a specific topic to research (e.g. Lenny Bruce's death).
2. Divide the class into four groups and assign each group one of the following newspapers: *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The LA Times*. The Brandeis library provides access to the 100+ year historical archive of each of these newspapers.
3. Members of each group should find and read one article on the assigned topic in their specific newspaper. You will have a broader sample if each student finds his or her own article instead of searching for a single article as a group.
4. Reconvene as a group and discuss the similarities and differences in the treatment of each topic in various parts of the country. (e.g. how is the treatment of Lenny Bruce's death different in LA than it is in Washington D.C.)

Variation #1: Examine a topic over time instead of across the country. This works better for broader topics. For example, you could ask your students to look for *NY Times* articles on comic books in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s (one decade per group), and discuss as a class how attitudes toward comic books changed over time.

Research Exercise #6 – Find a Course Reading (Mary George, Princeton)

This is a good way to give your students research practice without taking up any class time.

1. Give a citation for a required reading instead of the text itself (a journal article or a film review, e.g., that is available electronically).
2. Have students find the source, print it, and read it for class.
3. During class, you might have a brief discussion about how students found the source.

Research Exercise #7 – Reading for Research in Write Now! (Ryan Wepler)

Although it seems obvious to us, students often have a difficult time internalizing that the essays in *Write Now!* are intended to model the skills after which we would like them to pattern their own writing. To reinforce this, it helps to isolate specific elements of the essays rather than introducing them as broad examples. This exercise allows you to get specific about what makes for good (and bad) use of sources in research essays. Students should come to class having read one of the close reading essays in *Write Now!* (assigned by you):

1. Ask students to identify the two moments in the essay in which the author uses research most illuminatingly (can be completed outside of class).
2. Ask students to share their answers. Choose the moments that receive repeated mention and discuss the way in which the author uses his/her sources.
3. Turn the identification of specific ways in which the author of the essay uses sources into a general list of ways to use sources in a research paper.
4. Ask students to identify the weakest use of sources in the essay (can be completed outside of class).
5. Ask students to share their answers. Choose the moments that get the most votes. Discuss why the use of research is weak and propose ways in which the author could have used sources more effectively using the guidelines you have written on the board in step 3.

If completed thoroughly, this exercise will take at least 35 minutes and may consume the entire class if you work with a number of examples. To save time you can skip steps 4 and 5.

Research Exercise #8 – Identifying Research Strategies in Write Now! **(Ryan Wepler)**

This exercise is similar to “Reading for Research in *Write Now!*” but takes less class time and works in reverse. It is less demanding on students since they don’t have to define the research strategies on their own. Use it when you need to save time or when your students need a bit more guidance (especially in class discussion).

In preparation for this exercise, students should have read the “Source Functions Across the Disciplines” handout on the following page or the section of a rhetoric textbook going over various ways of using sources in a research essay. If using a textbook, the different strategies for using sources should be clearly defined and individualized. Most composition textbooks have such a section. If yours doesn’t or you don’t use a composition textbook, you can photocopy one from another textbook (available in the English Dept. graduate student workroom on the first floor of Rabb). I don’t teach from a textbook and photocopy the appropriate section from *Writing Analytically*.

1. As a class, briefly discuss the different strategies for using sources outlined in the reading assignment.
2. Divide the class into groups of 3-4 students, and assign each group a section of the *Write Now!* essay (you should choose the sections before class). It helps if the students have read the entire essay before class, but it isn’t essential.
3. Ask each group to identify one or more strategies for using sources (from the reading) in their assigned section. Circulate and join in while the groups are discussing. Group work should take 7-8 minutes.
4. Reconvene as a class and ask each group to share their findings. If their answers are vague, ask follow-up questions that keep them focused on specific moments in their assigned section of the *Write Now!* essay.

The estimated time for this exercise is 25-30 minutes. It will run longer if you spend a lot of time discussing in step 4.

Source Functions across the Disciplines

Sources may be used ...

- **As a primary focus of analysis.** The writer sets out to interpret, assess, illuminate, and/or complicate a source or set of sources. This use of a source is sometimes called (by humanists) “close textual analysis” or “close reading.” A close reading of a symbolic representation typically results in an *interpretation*, while one of an argumentative text typically results in either an interpretation or a *critique*.

From an American Studies paper on the Robert Gould Shaw memorial commemorating a white Civil War commander and his black troops: The murkiness of the relationship between whites and blacks is clearly reflected in the structure of the monument. Shaw is certainly the prominent figure—he and his horse are almost detached from the bronze background—while the black soldiers are in much shallower relief.

- **To establish the status quo—the standard opinion(s) on a topic, the standard way in which a problem is approached, or the current state of knowledge in the field.** The writer establishes the status quo, usually in the introduction, as a way of setting up a paper that’s positioned against the status quo.

From a biology paper on speciation by sexual selection: Scientists have explained Haldane’s rule for inviability, or sterility, by offering genetic explanations, the most notable being Muller’s dominance hypothesis (1940). Recently, Wu and David (1993) have offered a new explanation, known as the “faster male” theory, which centers on male-specific sterility traits evolving at a faster rate than female-specific ones. This theory has been substantiated by several independent studies (True et al., 1996; Turelli, 1998). Yet, as will be seen, some important objections can be raised against the faster male theory and ultimately against role of sexual selection in sterility.

- **To establish a problem or question worth addressing.** The writer presents a problem, question, or dilemma, usually in the introduction, that the sources highlight in some way, either because they disagree with one another, the writer disagrees with them, they illuminate a heretofore murky matter, the information they present is conflicting, and so on.

From a history of science paper on John Huston’s film Let There Be Light, a World War II documentary about soldiers treated for battle fatigue: Many historians and psychiatrists have observed psychiatry’s remarkable changes during the war, but often they present its emergence as a seamless transition in which psychiatry arrives as the “Cinderella” of the evening in the 1950s (Menninger 1991). Alternatively, histories which examine the more complicated expansion of psychiatry do so only from the inside—by looking at the internal changes of the discipline (Grob 1991; Hale 1995). An examination of *Let There Be Light* allows us to see the popularization of American psychiatry in the middle of this century more accurately, as an outgrowth of its dynamic relationship to the government and role in the war effort.

• **To supply context or background information.** The writer uses sources to explain what readers need to understand, usually about a time or culture, to follow the paper. In other words, the sources help the writer build a context for a discussion.

From an economics paper on the post-Cold War viability of NATO: Created in 1949, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was a military alliance composed initially of 21 nations, including the United States, Great Britain, France, and Belgium. Officially, NATO “embodies the transatlantic partnership between European members of NATO and the United States and Canada” and was “designed to bring about peace and stability throughout Europe” (NATO).... Directly after the fall of the Soviet Union, however, NATO began an eastward expansion to include former Soviet satellite countries. This move, we may infer, was designed to ensure the Organization’s relevance in the post-Cold War world.

• **To provide key terms or concepts.** The writer borrows a term or concept (perhaps qualifying, refining, or adding to it) and uses it to elucidate the topic at hand.

From a literature paper on race and class in Toni Morrison’s novel Song of Solomon: In his essay “On Being Black and Middle Class,” Shelby Steele describes the conflict between the two aspects of a middle-class black man’s identity as a “double bind” in which his race and class are “a threat to one another” (42). Macon Dead and his son, Milkman, both economically prosperous black men, find themselves caught in the double bind that Steele describes. But instead of strongly agreeing with Steele’s assertion of the importance of individual ownership and middle class values (Steele 47), Morrison presents a more ambiguous view: subscribing to middle class values under certain conditions, she also suggests the importance of abandoning some of those values.

• **To occasion a “face-off” with another opinion or interpretation.** The writer presents a commentator’s opinion or interpretation to dismiss it (when the view differs from the writer’s own), refine it (when the view is useful but incomplete or partially mistaken), or build on it (when the view is in agreement with the writer’s, and the writer can harness it to make a point). N.B.: This source function is rare in the natural sciences.

From an art history paper on Monet’s The Gare Saint-Lazare: Arrival of a Train (1877): These complex subjects contradict Zola’s assertion that “the task [the Impressionist] undertakes is not that of representing a particular thought or historical act” (425). The subject matter in *Arrival of a Train* does indeed represent a titanic historical conflict. It pits the modern world of the Industrial Revolution against the traditional world of old French Catholicism.

Research Exercise #9 – Finding New Sources during Revision (Ryan Wepler)

This exercise works well if your students' annotated bibliographies or rough drafts demonstrate a need for more sources. Steps 1-3 are usually completed outside of class, but could be completed during a class held in the library.

1. Assign a student essay—either from *Write Now!* or another of your choosing—for your students to read.
2. Ask them to identify a place in the author's argument that could be strengthened by the inclusion of another source on his/her topic. The additional source could be a potential counterargument that the author has failed to consider.
3. Tell students that you would like them to find one source the author could use to fill the gap and bring it to class.
4. In class, discuss what gaps your students found in the author's argument, what sources they found to bridge them, and how they went about finding those sources.

If steps 1-3 are completed outside of class, this exercise takes about 20 minutes of class time. If completed entirely in class, this exercise will likely consume the entire class period.

Research Exercise #10 –The Colbert Report Warns against Wikipedia

Satirical faux-pundit Stephen Colbert has a bit he's done about the unreliability of Wikipedia as a source. The clip can be found at:

<http://www.colbertnation.com/the-colbert-report-videos/72347/july-31-2006/the-word---wikiality>

Research Exercise #11 – Spot the Errors in Integrating Sources (Kerry Walk, Princeton)

Students having read the relevant section of a writing manual, you compose a page of academic writing that does many things wrong, large and small—setting up, punctuating, etc. Students (on the spot or as homework before class) spot the errors and say how to fix them.

Research Exercise #12 – Hands-On Reference List (Kerry Walk, Princeton)

Students examine and identify different types of sources (article in a journal, essay in a collection, etc.), then use a writing manual to determine the correct form in which the bibliographical information should appear in a works cited or reference list. Use this exercise to discuss different styles of documentation, and the pros and cons of adhering to them as closely as possible.

It may be possible to use the articles in your coursepack for this exercise, provided they come from different type of sources.

Research Exercise #13 – Evaluating Sources (Kerry Walk, Princeton)

Students develop criteria for evaluating sources by comparing two passages by different authors (one credible, one not) on the same topic.

Variation #1 – Evaluating Internet Sources: Students read an article or two about evaluating Internet sources (e.g., “Thinking Critically About World Wide Web Resources,” by Esther Grassian of the UCLA College Library, and available on the MSU website), then visit and evaluate a few sites, at least some of which should lack credibility. This is best done using the computer and projector in your classroom.

See also these useful websites for information about evaluating Internet sources:

<www.library.cornell.edu/okuref/research/webeval.html> and

<www.library.ucla.edu/libraries/college/instruct/web/critical.htm>.

Research Exercise #14 – Follow Up a Citation (Kerry Walk, Princeton)

Though it results in a topic for class discussion, this exercise needs to be set up one class in advance.

Having read and discussed an academic essay, students go to the library and actually look up one or two of the pieces cited in the essay, to see how it has been used, how fairly, what the author chose to include and leave out, etc. Students report back on what they find. Can be set up using citations that you know to be problematic—though many are anyway!—or to a particularly interesting essay.

Research Exercise #15 – Before and After a Source (Kerry Walk, Princeton)

To introduce what sources do, start small: have students discuss or write about a text or topic in or for class, then introduce a brief source item (an opinion, fact, theory, comparable version) and have them discuss or write again, in light of or responding to the source. Discuss what the source made happen in their thinking or articulating. (If the source is a claim or opinion, students can respond on both sides of it.)

Research Exercise #16 – Reading for Form and Function (Kerry Walk)

This exercise is similar to the exercise “Identifying Research Strategies in *Write Now!*” except that it uses an academic source instead of a student essay.

Students read an academic essay, mark where the writer uses a source and note which of several possible forms it takes (mention, summary, quotation, etc.), and most important try to describe what the source does for the argument in each case—e.g. establish motive, provide evidence, fill in background, supply keyterms, set up a debate or counter-argument. They also note particularly effective or ineffective uses of sources. In class discussion you arrive at some categories of function and of good/bad use. Or, ask students to choose out three different uses of a source to comment on. Also good as a draft workshop activity.

Research Exercise #17 – Critical Reading of Source-Based Writing (Kerry Walk, Princeton)

Discuss published examples of source use and misuse—e.g., a passage that reviews sources, then builds on their insights; that presents a knee-jerk response to a source; that contains an apparently deliberate misrepresentation of a source in the interests of advancing an argument; that features an over-abundance of references to sources; that presents an unattributed but real-sounding argument, which the author then argues against (the “straw man” fallacy). Polemical arguments work best for this assignment.

Research Exercise #18 – Citation Exercise (Jessie Stickgold-Sarah)

Students are often very anxious about citation and find it mysterious and arbitrary, or even punitive. I feel that there is basically nothing more boring than lecturing on MLA style, so I like to make them do the work themselves. If you want to talk about more interesting questions (like what the point is and why they're formatted the way they are) you can do that at the end when the stress level is down.

The activity: In pairs, students figure out full citations and write them on the board.

In advance: Ask them to read the MLA citation section from *Rules For Writers*.

Bring to class: Enough books for each pair of students to have their own, and xeroxed title pages of the readings they're using for an upcoming paper. Make sure to write up the citations for yourself and bring them in too, so you don't have to figure it out on the fly to correct it.

Day of: Poetry books are light if you're bringing in eight, but make sure they're not the same author with the same publisher. You may want to divide the students up yourself, or let them split into groups on their own, depending on the class dynamic. Marking station numbers on the blackboard helps mitigate the chaos. It's a good way to wake up a quiet class, and it gives them the confidence that with a book and the Hacker they can produce the correct citation. At the end of the exercise, go over the citations and correct them, and then you can talk about those more interesting questions.

Research Exercise #19 – Synthesizing Sources (Ryan Wepler)

I use this exercise on the day the annotated bibliography is due (to incorporate the bibliography into the exercise, see the variation below). Its goal is to give students practice turning their individual sources into a research context into which they can situate their own reading in their essays.

1. *To be completed before class.* Bring in paragraphs from two different sources (of the type that your students could use on their research essay). I typically use articles from the coursepack that we read earlier in the semester. The sources should be on the same topic, but should not say the same thing.
2. Ask your students to write a two sentence paraphrase of source 1
3. Ask them to write (below on the same sheet of paper) a two sentence paraphrase of source 2.
4. Ask your students to write two sentences about how the ideas of the two sources interrelate.
5. Have a 7-10 minute discussion of students' findings. Discuss in a way that allows students to model different thought patterns for their peers.

Estimated time: 20-25 minutes.

Variation #1 – Use Students' Annotations: Instead of the instructor supplying the sources to synthesize, students can use two sources from their annotated bibliography. Since they've written the annotations, they really only need to complete step 4.

This version of the exercise has several advantages over the model above. It takes about ten minutes less class time, requires no preparation from the instructor, and allows students to leave class with a piece of writing that they might be able to use (after revision) in their research essays. However, since students will each be writing on different sources, it is more difficult to find common ground for the discussion in step 5. A productive discussion is still possible, though.

Research Exercise #20 – Narrowing Research Topics (Cory Nelson)

I do not have an exercise that I use to help students narrow their research topics; typically, this work happens one on one. However, I run a class discussion that distinguishes between productive and unproductive research topics. In essence, I try to help the students avoid two major pitfalls in research.

Pitfall #1: The Impossibly Broad Topic

I usually begin by writing a few sample (broad) topics on the board that relate to the text at hand (*A Streetcar Named Desire*), like "race," "class," and "the American South." The questions I ask the students about the topics include:

- What would be frustrating about researching this topic?
- If you went to the library and asked the librarian to show you the book about "race," what do you imagine the librarian might say?
- What are some more specific questions we could ask to narrow these topics?
 - Examples: How were race relations changing during the period when this text was written? Or, What was this author's personal relationship with and attitude toward the South?

Pitfall #2: The Incredibly Narrow Topic

I find this to be a much more common problem in the UWS; students pick a theme or motif from the text at hand and then try to find other people who have written about that theme or motif. Again, I begin by writing a few sample (narrow) topics on the board, such as "water imagery in *A Streetcar Named Desire*" and "Blanche DuBois as a compulsive liar." The questions I ask the students include:

- How many books and articles do you think have been written about water imagery in *A Streetcar Named Desire*? (I model the MLA search for them on the projector—the answer is zero.)
- What would be wrong with researching "water imagery" as a general motif in literature? (Model search in MLA: 271 hits.) How would you go about choosing among the hundreds and hundreds of articles you would unearth?
- What would be wrong with randomly choosing four articles about water imagery and using them to back up your reading of *Streetcar*?
- If you conducted research on the problem of compulsive lying, what kind of a contestable thesis statement could you generate? Would you be able to produce anything other than a "baseline" reading?

I finish this discussion by telling students that the above topics are appropriate for close reading papers, not research papers. In other words, students should avoid picking a theme or symbol, deciding what that theme/symbol means, and then searching for other critics who agree. The point of research is to learn about what you *do not* know, rather than to confirm what you already think.

Exercise #21: Integrating Quotations from Outside Sources

Identify the author's credentials by looking in the front or back of your source or by googling the author.

When introducing the source include:

1. The title of the book or article
2. The name of the author and his or her credentials, if known
3. A brief summary of what you will be quoting followed by a colon

After you quote the source rephrase what it says in your own words. If necessary you can offer further clarification through examples or by expanding on your initial explanation of what the quotation means.

Example:

Book title: *Case Studies in Biomedical Ethics*

Author: Robert M. Veatch

Credentials: Professor of Medical Ethics at Georgetown University

Summary of quotation: I will be quoting Veatch's explanation of duty-based ethics and will explain that it focuses on the means rather than the ends.

Putting it all together:

In *Case Studies in Biomedical Ethics*, Georgetown University Professor of Medical Ethics Robert Veatch explains that duty-based ethics focuses on the means rather than the ends: "Rightness and wrongness are inherent in the act itself, independent of the consequences" (9). In other words, an act is either right or wrong regardless of the outcome so that the ends can never justify the means. For example...

Research Exercise #21: Articulating Your Research Project

You can find this formula in *The Craft of Research* (pages 54-61). Use it to better articulate your research project and its significance.

Example (page 61)

1. **Topic:** I am studying: _____ (i.e., how the holocaust changed the political views of Hungarian political prisoners)

2. **Conceptual Question:** because I want to find out _____ (i.e., how the holocaust and genocide changed their mindset)

3. **Conceptual Significance:** in order to help readers understand _____ (i.e., how genocide impacts our understanding of the past and future)

4. **Potential Practical Application:** so that readers *might* better gain a better understanding of _____ (i.e., the significance this event has on history)

(audience): readers / historians / other

WHERE AM I? Assessing Your Research

Objectives: To assess the progress on your research paper to better know what has been done and what needs more work; specific practice at formulating analytical questions

- 1) Put the research paper assignment into your own words (what you think this assignment asks you to do; one to three sentences).

- 2) What have you done so far to complete the assignment? What do you think you have left to do?

- 3) What is your best source so far and why? How did you find it?

- 4) Based upon what you've read so far, offer what you believe are TWO ANALYTICAL QUESTIONS about your incident (*hint: analytical questions usually start with **how** or **why***). For example, if I were researching "magic" in Malaysia, I might ask: Why do some Muslims (like R. Lee's informants) join esoteric groups? How does ritual (as suggested by R. Lee) serve to contain such powerful emotions as awe and fear in an extraordinary experience?

After completing 1-4 above, share your responses with your writing group. Allow approximately 10 minutes at end of session for class-wide discussion of good analytical questions, and the relationship between analytical question(s) and thesis.

Can the Topic Be Researched?

Question A: Do the economies that result from a trash burning plant outweigh or not outweigh its environmental impact?

Question B: Is sexual preference a result of nature (physically based) or nurture (socially-culturally based)?

Question C: Does McDonald's or Burger King make a better burger?

Question D: Is Prozac a good way to treat clinical depression in certain cases?

Question E: Is there a link between hours of television viewing and violent behavior in children aged 8-14?

Is the Question Too Broad or Too Narrow?

Below are five exercises designed to improve your ability to select a good research question. Select what you think is the best research question (neither too broad nor too narrow).

2A.

Question A: What marketing strategies does the Coca-Cola company currently apply?

Question B: What is the Coca-Cola company's future marketing plan?

Question C: What marketing strategies has the Coca-Cola company used in the past?

2B.

Question A: What impact has deregulation had on the airline industry?

Question B: What percentage of commercial airline crashes were traced to negligent maintenance during the 10 years immediately preceding and following deregulation?

Question C: What impact has deregulation had on commercial airline safety?

2C.

Question A: Do children sent to day care or preschool start kindergarten with more developed skills?

Question B: Do children sent to day care or preschool start kindergarten with more highly developed language skills?

Question C: Do children sent to day care or preschool start kindergarten with larger vocabularies?

2D.

Question A: What are the 14 different disease-causing genes that were discovered in 1994?

Question B: What is the importance of genetic research in our lives?

Question C: How might the discovery of a genetic basis for obesity change the way in which we treat obese persons, both medically and socially?

2E.

Question A: How can adult children of alcoholics most positively interact with their alcoholic parents?

Question B: How do adult children of alcoholics interact with their alcoholic parents?

Question C: What is the major emotional reaction of adult children of alcoholics to their alcoholic parents?

Refining Research Essay Topics

I spend more time narrowing essay topics during individual conferences than in-class activities. Unlike the close reading and lens essay units, I prefer to meet with students in a one-on-one setting before they begin drafting their research papers. Research essays can go wrong conceptually or topically in more ways than the other two UWS essays. Thus, I try to intervene early by giving students a short questionnaire to complete before they start making paragraphs. The exercise clarifies whether the student has a manageable and original research topic as well as a defined sense of the essay's motive. If the student struggles with these questions, he or she often refines the essay topic before meeting with me.

Topic:

- 1. What question(s) do I have about my topic? Have other scholars answered this question?***
- 2. What key terms will I use to conduct my research?***
- 3. In what sort of texts will I investigate my topic?***
- 4. What am I contributing to the body of knowledge on my topic?***

Appraising Sources

I. INITIAL APPRAISAL OF A PRINTED SOURCE (vs. an electronic one)

A. Author

1. What are the author's credentials--institutional affiliation (where he or she works), educational background, past writings, or experience? Is the book or article written on a topic in the author's area of expertise? You can use the biographical information located in the publication itself to help determine the author's affiliation and credentials.
2. Has your instructor mentioned this author? Have you seen the author's name cited in other sources or bibliographies? Respected authors are cited frequently by other scholars. For this reason, always note those names that appear in many different sources.
3. Is the author associated with a reputable institution or organization? What are the basic values or goals of the organization or institution?

B. Date of Publication

1. When was the source published? This date is often located on the face of the title page below the name of the publisher. If it is not there, look for the copyright date on the reverse of the title page. On Web pages, the date of the last revision is usually at the bottom of the home page, sometimes every page.
2. Is the source current or out-of-date for your topic? Topic areas of continuing and rapid development, such as the sciences, demand more current information. On the other hand, topics in the humanities often require material that was written many years ago. At the other extreme, some news sources on the Web now note the hour and minute that articles are posted on their site.

C. Edition or Revision

Is this a first edition of this publication or not? Further editions indicate a source has been revised and updated to reflect changes in knowledge, include omissions, and harmonize with its intended reader's needs. Also, many printings or editions may indicate that the work has become a standard source in the area and is reliable. If you are using a Web source, do the pages indicate revision dates?

D. Publisher

Note the publisher. If the source is published by a university press, it is likely to be scholarly. Although the fact that the publisher is reputable does not necessarily guarantee quality, it does show that the publisher may have high regard for the source being published.

E. Title of Journal

Is this a scholarly or a popular journal? This distinction is important because it indicates different levels of complexity in conveying ideas. If you need help in determining the type of journal, check your chart, "**Is This a Scholarly Periodical?**"

II. CONTENT ANALYSIS

Having made an initial appraisal, you should now examine the body of the source. Read the preface to determine the author's intentions for the book. Scan the table of contents and the index to get a broad overview of the material it covers. Note whether bibliographies are included. Read the chapters that specifically address your topic. Scanning the table of contents of a journal or magazine issue is also useful. As with books, the presence and quality of a bibliography at the end of the article may reflect the care with which the authors have prepared their work.

A. Intended Audience

What type of audience is the author addressing? Is the publication aimed at a specialized or a general audience? Is this source too elementary, too technical, too advanced, or just right for your needs?

B. Objective Reasoning

1. Is the information covered fact, opinion, or propaganda? It is not always easy to separate fact from opinion. Facts can usually be verified; opinions, though they may be based on factual information, evolve from the interpretation of facts. Skilled writers can make you think their interpretations are facts.
2. Does the information appear to be valid and well-researched, or is it questionable and unsupported by evidence? Assumptions should be reasonable. Note errors or omissions.
3. Are the ideas and arguments advanced more or less in line with other works you have read on the same topic? The more radically an author departs from the views of others in the same field, the more carefully and critically you should scrutinize his or her ideas.
4. Is the author's point of view objective and impartial? Is the language free of emotion-arousing words and bias?

C. Coverage

1. Does the work update other sources, substantiate other materials you have read, or add new information? Does it extensively or marginally cover your topic? You should explore enough sources to obtain a variety of viewpoints.
2. Is the material primary or secondary in nature? Primary sources are the raw material of the research process. Secondary sources are based on primary sources. For example, if you were researching Konrad Adenauer's role in rebuilding West Germany after World War II, Adenauer's own writings would be one of many primary sources available on this topic. Others might include relevant government documents and contemporary German newspaper articles. Scholars use this primary material to help generate historical interpretations--a secondary source. Books, encyclopedia articles, and scholarly journal articles about Adenauer's role are considered secondary sources. In the sciences, journal articles and conference proceedings written by experimenters reporting the results of their research are primary documents. Choose both primary and secondary sources when you have the opportunity.

D. Writing Style

Is the publication organized logically? Are the main points clearly presented? Do you find the text easy to read, or is it stilted or choppy? Is the author's argument repetitive?

E. Evaluative Reviews

1. Locate critical reviews of books in a reviewing source, such as *Book Review Index*, *Book Review Digest*, OR *Periodica/Abstracts*. Is the review positive? Is the book under review considered a valuable contribution to the field? Does the reviewer mention other books that might be better? If so, locate these sources for more information on your topic.
2. Do the various reviewers agree on the value or attributes of the book or has it aroused controversy among the critics?
3. For Web sites, consider the next section...

III. "IS THIS A SCHOLARLY WEBSITE?" — How to Appraise Electronic Sources

A. Context: The Primary Factor

1. The User Context: The most important factor when evaluating Web sites is your search, your needs. What are you using the Web for? Entertainment? Academic work? Hobbies or a vocational interest? Scholarly sources are traditionally very strongly text-based. Compare the appearance and the content of an academic journal with a popular magazine.

2. The Web Context: Some of the visual distinctions that signal the nature of content in print sources hold true on the Web as well, although, because the Web encourages wider use of graphics, Web versions of printed works usually contain more graphics and more color than their print counterparts. Color graphics appeared on the New York Times Web site before they appeared in the printed New York Times, for instance.

Compare the Web versions of the The New York Times, U. S. News, and the National Enquirer for a clearer example of different context.

B. How to Appraise Context

1. Here's an eight-point evaluation checklist from the UC Berkeley Library.
 - What can the URL tell you?
 - Who wrote the page? Is he, she, or the authoring institution a qualified authority?
 - Is it dated? Current, timely?
 - Is information cited authentic?
 - Does the page have overall integrity and reliability as a source?
 - What's the bias?
 - Could the page or site be ironic, like a satire or a spoof?
 - If you have questions or reservations, how can you satisfy them?

How to “Frame” in a Research Essay

Framing is a technique used in research essays to help analyze a research topic. Similar to the lens text used in essay 2, a “framing” source is a text (book or article) that provides some theoretical or conceptual material. Framing helps us avoid a summary, “report” type essay in our research project.

Framing involves discussion of a concept, term, or idea in a text and its application to a specific passage from case material. Generally, we cannot actually “frame” in a paragraph unless we have the following elements in the paragraph (or the paragraph before the one in question):

- *Quote from framing source* - For example, “Groups construct their cultures in many ways which involve mainly the reconstruction of historical culture, and the construction of new culture... Cultural construction and reconstruction are ongoing group tasks in which new and renovated cultural symbols, activities, and materials are continually being added to and removed from existing repertoires” (Nagel, 251-2).
- *Explain key concepts in quote* - For example, “‘Cultural reconstruction’ involves an effort to look back on historically significant activities for guidance in reviving or ‘reconstructing’ elements of a culture”, might work as an explanation.
- *Apply to specific case material for topic* - For example, in an essay on recent efforts to revive Scottish identity in NYC, one might write: “In recent years there have been numerous efforts to reconstruct Scottish identity through a revival of Scottish customs and practices, including the decision by some Scottish-Americans to wear kilts.”
- *Use a specific passage in support of effort to frame Scot identity* - Find and include a quote from a journal article/book that discusses the presence of kilts in NYC, or even a news article on the presence of kilts. For example, “individuals seeking to reconnect with their identity participate in reenactments of the 79th Infantry’s involvement in the Civil War. The group shows its ‘Scottish’ heritage by participating in several Scottish games and other Celtic events throughout the year. This gives members the opportunity to ‘don the kilts’ and ‘listen to the pipes’ in true Scottish fashion” (National Civil War Association’s 79th infantry website. <http://www.ncwa.org/79th-ny.html>).

The resulting paragraph looks like the following:

Scots in the US are involved in a conscious effort to reconstruct Scottish American identity through a revival of their historic role in the US Civil War. “Groups construct their cultures in many ways which involve mainly the reconstruction of historical culture, and the construction of new culture... Cultural construction and reconstruction are ongoing group tasks in which new and renovated cultural symbols, activities, and materials are continually being added to and removed from existing repertoires” (Nagel, 251-2). As Nagel explains, cultural reconstruction involves an effort to look back on historically significant activities for guidance in reviving or “reconstructing” elements of a culture. This is notable in the example of the 79th Infantry in the Civil War. In recent years there have been numerous efforts to reconstruct Scottish identity through a revival of Scottish customs and practices, including the decision by some Scottish-Americans to wear kilts on a daily basis. Individuals seeking to reconnect with their identity participate in reenactments of the 79th Infantry’s involvement in the Civil War. The group “shows its ‘Scottish’ heritage by participating in several Scottish games and other Celtic events throughout the year. This gives members the

opportunity to 'don the kilts' and 'listen to the pipes' in true Scottish fashion" (National Civil War Association's 79th infantry website. <http://www.ncwa.org/79th-ny.html>). Through events such as these it is clear that Scottish Americans are working to reconstruct their own identities in the New York area.

How do I look for framing in my peers' essays?

To check on the effectiveness of 'framing' in a peer's essay you need to locate the framing quotes, the case quotes, and the actual discussion of how the frame relates to the case. All of these elements should be found in a paragraph (or two at the most):

- *Framing quote* - ask, "does the peer explain the quote"? If not, offer an explanation for the peer.
- *Case quote* - ask, "can the framing quote be applied to the case quote"? If not, then write that the peer needs a case quote that will do so, and suggest the kind of quote that can work.
- *Actual discussion* - ask, "on the basis of the discussion in this paragraph (or two), is it clear to me how the peer is applying the ideas in the framing quote to the case quote"? If the answer is no, then write a sentence or two about how the peer can better make the connection.

Is This a Scholarly Journal Article?

Scholarly Journal Articles

- **Purpose** - to inform, report, or make original research available to other researchers.
- **Authors/Publishers** - written by scholars or researchers in the field. Articles are peer reviewed by other experts in the field before being published by a professional organization.
- **Sources** - cite sources; include extensive documentation to previously published research (footnotes, endnotes, bibliographies, etc.)
- **Language** - use terminology, jargon, and the language of the discipline covered.
- **Format** - have grave, serious formats. May contain graphs and charts to illustrate concepts.
- **Examples** - Annals of Microbiology, Harvard Business Review, Journal of Physiology, Physics Letters

Non-Scholarly Journal Articles (News/General Interest)

- **Purpose** - to provide general information to a well educated, general audience.
- **Authors/Publishers** - written by staff, free-lance, or scholarly writers. Articles are not peer reviewed; editorial team makes all content decisions before being published by commercial enterprises for a profit.
- **Sources** - Sometimes cite sources, but not as a rule.
- **Language** - geared to any educated audience; no specialty assumed, unfamiliar terms often defined.
- **Format** - are attractive in appearance. Include photos, illustrations, and graphics to enhance the publication.
- **Examples** - Atlantic Monthly, Newsweek, Fortune, Psychology Today

Popular Magazines

- **Purpose** - to entertain or persuade, to sell products or services.
- **Authors/Publishers** - written by the staff or free-lance writers for a broad-based audience. Articles are not peer reviewed. They are published by commercial enterprises for profit.
- **Sources** - rarely cite sources. Original sources may be obscure.
- **Language** - use simple language for minimal educational level. Articles are short, with little depth.
- **Format** - are generally glossy with an attractive format. Contain photos, illustrations, and drawings to enhance publication's image.
- **Examples** - Better Homes and Gardens, GQ, Glamour, People Weekly, Sports Illustrated

MLA Citation and You: A Brief Overview

We didn't get a chance to go over documentation in much detail, but here is an explicit statement of what I expect from you: you must always use a consistent scholarly documentation format for any work you produce for me (or for anyone else at any other time in your academic career, for that matter). The default format for citation in this course is MLA, the more-or-less universally applied format for the discussion of literature. If you are familiar with or have a strong preference for another comparable academic format (APA or Chicago, for example), I'm happy to give you a chance to use it. However, be warned that you must always use an academically appropriate method of citation for all of your academic work, or I will not accept it. This means that all quotes or specific references in the body of your work must get appropriate in-text citation, and that you must include a works cited list at the end of your assignments. The talented Diana Hacker has provided a very detailed guide to citation in a variety of formats in *Rules for Writers*, but here are the basics of MLA citation if you should need to jog your memory:

Every page of your essay must have your last name and the page number printed in the upper right-hand corner. Your name, your instructor's name, the course number, and the date of submission appear double-spaced and in that order on the left-hand side of the first page, above the title. All text is double-spaced in 12-point, times new roman font, including the title. Titles should be centered.

In-text citations appear as follows:

"A Description of a City Shower" has evoked strong reactions from many readers over the years: Mrs. Pilkington's mother famously lost interest in her breakfast when she read that, "Sweepings from butchers' stalls, dung, guts, and blood, / Drowned puppies, stinking sprats, all drenched in mud, / Dead cats, and turnip tops, come tumbling down the flood" (61-3). I can't say that I blame her.

The lines of verse are separated by forward slash marks to keep Swift's line breaks intact. Note that the above citation is exactly three lines. Should you need to quote more than three lines, they must appear in this manner:

Swift demonstrates an incredible scorn for all his fellow humans in just a few brief lines:

Now in contiguous drops the flood comes down,
Threatening with deluge this devoted town.
To shop in crowds the daggled females fly,
Pretend to cheapen goods but nothing buy.
The Templar spruce, while every spout's abroach,
Stays till 'tis fair, yet seems to call a coach. (31-6)

If I were quoting prose instead of verse, I would need to indent a quotation if it were longer than four lines of text, and my citation would include page numbers covered rather than line numbers. Note that the above lines run from 31 to 36, and that the citation does not repeat unnecessary information, as a reader can assume that the "6" stands for 36 unless told otherwise. If the lines quoted ran from line 35 to line 46, my citation would look like this: (35-46). If it were 135-146, this

would be appropriate: (135-46). And if the citation was from line 135 to 246 (as unlikely as a citation like that would be to appear), it would appear thusly: (135-246).

There is no need to reference anything other than page or line number if the title of the work discussed appears in the body of your text before your quotation. Note that this is almost always the case when discussing literature. If it is not clear to what work you're referring, citation of page number is preceded by the author's name: (Swift 21-7). If you're discussing multiple works by the same author and have not made it clear in your previous discussion which work you're quoting, use a shortened version of the title: ("City Shower" 21-7). Note that there is no punctuation inside in-text citations. If for some reason it is not clear that you are referencing line numbers, which are assumed to be the standard means of reference for a poem, a single line looks like this: (ln 21). A citation covering multiple lines looks like this: (ll 21-7). Again, note the lack of punctuation inside the citation.

A standard entry for a book on a works cited page looks like this:

Brooks, Cleanth. *The Well-Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry*. New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1948.

A work in an anthology looks like this:

Swift, Jonathan. "A Description of a City Shower." 1710. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 7th Ed. Vol. 1C. Ed. M.H. Abrams and Stephen Greenblatt. New York: WW Norton and Co, 2000. 2300-1.

There can be considerable variation in works cited entries, and Diana Hacker has dedicated her professional life to laying out every possible permutation in an easy-to-read format. The rule of thumb with this sort of citation, though, is that it needs to include all the relevant information a reader might need in order to find the work with minimal effort, organized in order of importance. Thus, the entry for the anthology appears after the information for the poem, which includes original date of publication. Our course pack should have title pages reproduced for all the works we're reading, so get into the habit of treating them as though you are citing the book itself. There is no reason to specify that any of our readings come from a course pack, as you have access to the original publication information for everything we're reading.

Useful Phrases for Integrating Sources

- As **author** argues.....
- In his/her study “xxxx,” **author** provides a useful definition of.....
- To clarify this tension, we might turn to the work of **author**.....
- One solution might be found in **author’s** text.....
- **Author** defines this problem as....
- In describing this issue, **author** observes....
- Critics disagree upon this issue, with **author** claiming...
- **Author** provides a comprehensive overview of
- Although he/she writes in another context, **author’s** concept of “xxxx” may be useful.....
- The published accounts of “xxxx” feel inadequate, with **author** merely commenting that....
- Scholars have been remarkably reticent on this point; the clearest articulation of the problem has been **author’s** vague reference to.....

Lesson Plan: Working with Annotated Bibliographies (Anne Caswell Klein, Princeton)

Lesson objective: Start identifying the types of sources that students still lack for their research projects. Spend some hands-on time trying to find appropriate sources, and learning ways to move beyond basic research (e.g. using discipline-specific databases).

When and Where: This class falls after students have gotten feedback on proposals, and just before the first draft of Essay #3. I usually do this lesson on a second visit to Firestone; it could happen in a regular classroom (ending with step 4, or the whole lesson if students bring laptops to a wired classroom). In either case, it's helpful to have the course librarians present.

Total estimated time: 80 minutes

Additional outcomes: Students have some time for individual consultations with instructor and librarian. Students start thinking more systematically about what *kinds* of sources they need, not just how to increase the volume of sources they have xeroxed! This is a great way to help students realize that all of their sources are secondary (a common problem with historical sources, I've found).

Work completed before class: In a previous session, we have had a discussion on ways to use sources in research-based arguments (using Kerry's handout on 5 ways to use sources in academic writing). As a pre-draft homework, students have prepared annotated bibliographies (assignment is below).

Step 1 (3 min):

We discuss how students will need to find two **basic groups of sources**, literary and historical. Within each of these groups, they need to **find various** types. I remind students that they have probably encountered the terms "primary source" and "secondary source" in their coursework or AP classes, and we come up with a basic definition. I point out that these terms are highly discipline-specific, and that as students move into a discipline they will need to learn its expected relationship to sources.

Step2 (15 min +):

I suggest that thinking about sources based on *function in a particular assignment* will give students a more flexible way to think about sources (and one they can use in various classes across disciplines). We quickly review our previous assignments, and think about what functioned as primary and secondary sources.

I make a chart on the blackboard with two columns, one for historical sources, and one for literary. We **brainstorm types of sources that qualify as primary, secondary, etc, and try to get at what we mean by each division**. (*The librarians' active help is great here! They think of types of sources that never occur to me or the students!)

An important part of this step is discussing **how the same source could be put in various places on the chart** depending on how the *writer* wants to use it. For example, if a book review is being used to get a sense of historical context, it would go on the left side of the chart, whereas if it's being

analyzed for a particular reading of a novel, it would go on the right side. It's also a good time to discuss in passing how you'd find sources of each type, and how secondary sources might point you to primary ones.

So for a literature-based text in context essay that asks students to make an argument about how a novel engages with a contemporaneous historical debate, the chart might look like this:

| | |
|--|--|
| Primary historical:
Newspaper articles
Diaries
Speeches
Etc. | Primary literary:
Your novel (e.g. <i>The Brothers Karamazov</i>) |
| Secondary historical:
Monographs by historians
Journal articles
Textbooks
Etc. | Secondary literary:
Lit, criticism on your novel (e.g. Bakhtin on <i>The Brothers Karamazov</i>)
Book reviews of your novel
Other works by that author
Other works that inform that novel: <i>these could also go elsewhere on the chart, e.g. in "primary historical"—that's part of the point, to figure out how you want to use them, and let that use determine the classification.</i>
Etc. |
| Tertiary historical:
Historiography | Tertiary literary:
Critics reading other important critics (e.g. Morson explaining Bakhtin's reading of Dostoevsky)
Bibliographies
Theory [<i>this may also be a category of its own., or may be outside the chart altogether!</i>] |

In this example, the left side of the chart would be primarily concerned with the CONTEXT (whatever issue the student chose), and the right side would be primarily concerned with the TEXT. I've also done this activity with other types of research assignments—you just have to rethink what your two columns would be.

Step 3 (5 min):

I remind students that they need to think about both TYPE of source and its USE within the structure of an argument, and we quickly **brainstorm functions**, e.g. for key terms, as markers of authority, etc. (they'll remember some from Kerry's handout, and will think of others).

Step4 (15min +):

Students **workshop their annotated bibliographies** in pairs or writing groups, looking for a VARIETY of sources (both TYPES and USES) and try to assess the reliability of the sources that have already been found. They discuss what's missing, and come up with ideas for kinds of sources that might help, and ways to go about finding them.

The librarians and I circulate to various groups; this is another great moment for the librarians to teach, and help students look at their bibliographies with a critical eye. This is a good moment to discuss keyword searches with the small groups, and help them think about strategies for new searches.

Step 5 (remaining time):

Students move to computers, and try **to find the kinds of sources they are missing**. This is a great point for a librarian to do a brief demonstration of a **discipline-specific database** (e.g. MLA or Historical Abstracts) with a sample search, and then lots of hands-on individual help. A handout that lists appropriate databases & specialized search tools is helpful. At this point, students have a clear idea of what they are trying to find— and where they are getting stuck—and appreciate the time to look and to have consultations with the instructor and librarians.

Lesson Plan: Working with Sources (Lauren Holm)

Objective: to help students effectively incorporate sources into their essays.

Total Estimated Time: 1 class session.

Step 1: Ask your students why we use sources in the first place. I find they come up with a lot of reasons, some better than others. Now might be a time to go back to "the difference between high school and college" as a way of sorting the different reasons for citing sources your students come up with. Ultimately you want to emphasize that we are moving beyond using sources to prove that your thesis is "right." Instead, we use sources to raise questions or controversies and to put texts into conversation (with each other and with ourselves). If you use Writing Analytically, you might have your students read the section "Six Strategies for Analyzing Sources" prior to this class. (5-10 minutes)

Step 2: As a class, look at a Write Now essay or other published essay you're using in class. Ask students to look at the author's use of sources. Some possible questions: How does the author introduce quotes? How long are the quotes? What do the quotes do? How does the author use the quote in his/her argument? How does the author analyze the quote? Where does the author summarize rather than quote? Why? What is the balance between the quotes and the author's own voice? (10-15 minutes)

Step 3: Outline for your students the ideal structure for quotes: the quote is introduced into the student's writing smoothly using signal phrases (see *Rules for Writers* page 408); the quote is given (quoting only what is necessary); the quote is cited correctly; the quote is followed by the author's interpretation. These parts should always be present. (5-10 minutes)

Step 4: Break students into small groups and have them go through each other's papers. They should mark whether their partner has provided the parts outlined in Step 3 and then move to more evaluative critique of the author's use of quotations. See the sample Peer Review worksheet. (remaining time in class minus 5 minutes)

Step 5: Wrap up. You always want to try to bring your class back together after small group work before class ends. Restate what you wanted students to get out of this lesson. If they weren't able to get through each other's papers, ask them to continue the exercise for homework (they can go through their own papers asking the same questions). Recap strategies students have at their disposal for incorporating sources, both the ones you've introduced today and tools you've taught them earlier in the semester (close reading exercises they've done before can be repeated to get the most out of quotations in their papers).

Peer Review Sheet for Working with Sources

1. Nuts and Bolts.

Exchange papers with your partner and look through their essay for each use of quotation from an outside source.

For each quote answer the following questions:

Has your partner introduced the quote using signal phrases? Could the quote be introduced more effectively?

Has your partner cited the source and punctuated the quotation correctly?

2. Use of Quotes

For each quote, answer the following questions:

Is this quote necessary to your partner's argument? Why?

Has the author quoted enough? Too much? Think about this question in terms of each specific quote (is it 8 lines when only 3 are necessary?) and in terms of the whole essay (do the sources overwhelm the author's own voice or argument?).

What does the author do with the quote? Does the author talk about the specific language of the quote?

Does the author provide enough analysis?

Lesson Plan: Effective Research When Students Know Their Topic

NOTE: The handouts to accompany this lesson are on the following two pages.

VERSION 1 (topic):

Lesson Objective: To introduce students to relevant articles databases and do a search based on their own topics.

When and Where: At this point, students have chosen a topic; they may have written their research proposal. This lesson plan can be used either before or after proposal conferences. The session can take place in an electronic classroom in Firestone or in a wired classroom with laptops. If students need to share computers, make sure that each student gets sufficient searching time.

Total Estimated Time: 80 mm.

Additional Outcomes: Students get hands-on experience doing searches using keywords and other search criteria. They leave with at least one resource for an actual assignment.

Assignment that is underway: The research paper

Work completed before class: Students have been given the assignment for the research paper, and have decided on a topic. If they've written a research proposal, they bring it to class.

Step 1: Librarian introduces database searching: what they're good for, what kinds are available, etc., and provides a short list of recommended databases to the class. (5-10 min)

Step 2: Students write down their topics, and brainstorm keywords, either alone or in pairs. (10 min)

Step 3: Students select a database from the list and search in it. Instructor and librarian circulate to help students who need it. Instructor can specify that students find a particular kind of source (academic journal, newspaper, popular periodical, etc.). (15-20 min)

Step 4: Instructor asks students what they found in their searching, what obstacles they ran into, or what questions they have. Put answers on the board, and co-lead a discussion with librarian about how to tackle these searching issues (broadening or narrowing search, using subject headings, trying another database, etc.) Here, instructor can discuss the recursive nature of the research process, and the common frustrations that all researchers encounter. (10-15 min)

Step 5: Students continue searching and by the end should have compiled 3-5 potential sources. (10 min)

Step 6: Discuss difference between articles available online, and articles available in hard copy only. Show students how to locate journals & call numbers and how to retrieve the right volume from the stacks. If time, students go to stacks to retrieve articles and make copies. (10-15 min)

VERSION 2 (proposal):

Lesson objective: To focus on the types of sources that an argument will require, think about what research a proposed argument implies, and help students come up with efficient ways to search for these sources.

When and Where: Either the day proposals are due or soon thereafter. This lesson can take place in an electronic classroom in Firestone or in a wired classroom with laptops.

Total estimated time: 80 minutes

Additional outcomes: In addition to proposal conferences (which in many seminars are extremely brief), this allows students to get feedback on their research proposals. Also, instructors and librarians get another early chance to help shape topics and intervene when needed—but it puts the burden of searching on the students.

Work completed before class: In a previous seminar, students have read sample research proposals and critiqued them, and have been introduced to the idea of a research question. Before this class, students have written a formal proposal for their research project (in many seminars, this is Pre-draft 3.2). The proposal might focus on framing the research question, articulating motive, and sketching out a plan for research. Some instructors require an initial bibliography with the proposal; others ask for a less formal accounting of sources that students have used so far.

If you do include a bibliography with proposal, consider having students indicate the specific search pathway they used to find each source: for example, did they Google? What terms? Did they see the source mentioned in a bibliography, then use the Main Catalog to find the book at Princeton? This information is really helpful for the librarians, since they can see what resources the students are—and are not—using, and help students who have gotten stuck.

Step 1: Instructor and librarian co-lead a mini-workshop on a student's proposal, asking students to generate sub-topics and keywords that may help the student track down useful sources. Discussion can also touch on how the topic may need to be broadened, narrowed, or otherwise modified. (15 min)

Step 2: Students workshop each other's proposals in small groups as instructor and librarian circulate. (Students can fill in questions 1 & 2 on the hand-out together.) (10-15 min)

Step 3: Students move to computers, and librarian or instructor makes suggestions about what resources to use for searching: probably a keyword search of a multi-disciplinary database or the Main Catalog. A quick demonstration of one search to remind students about specifics (truncating, limiting searches, etc) is often helpful. (10 min)

Step 4: Students have time to conduct individual searches, learning inquiry-based research techniques as they try to find sources that look interesting and helpful. Librarians and instructor circulate to give search suggestions, help students identify what kinds of sources they're seeing, etc. [Alternative: students work in pairs to find a suggested number/variety of sources for each proposal. For example, they might try to find one academic monograph, one less scholarly book, one journal article, one newspaper article, etc.] (40 min)

Hand-out for students working with the Main Catalog

1) Write down your current version of your research question.

2) Brainstorm keywords related to your topic. Remember to consider synonyms, as well as various levels of formality (e.g. teenagers, adolescents)

| | | |
|-------|-------|-------|
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |

3) Do a keyword search of the Main Catalog, using the “Guided Search” function. (Look for the tab at the top of the Main Catalog screen. A Guided Search lets you use more terms, and combine them differently.) Record the terms you search. Was this a useful search?

| | | |
|-------|-------|-------|
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
|-------|-------|-------|

4) If necessary, modify your search (broaden, narrow, or change). Record the new search terms you used. What did you do? How did it change your results?

| | | |
|-------|-------|-------|
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
|-------|-------|-------|

5) Find one promising book, and write down the citation. (Hint: citations include the author, book title, publisher, and date. You also should note down the call number.)

6) Click on the “long view” and write down the Library of Congress subject headings that look most interesting.

7) Determine where in Goldfarb this book is located.

Hand-out for students working with a database

1) Write down your current version of your research question.

2) Brainstorm keywords related to your topic. Remember to consider synonyms, as well as various levels of formality (e.g. teenagers, adolescents)

| | | |
|-------|-------|-------|
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |

3) Based on your topic, choose one of the recommended databases from the handout. Record the terms you search. Was this a useful search?

Which database: _____

Keywords searched:

| | | |
|-------|-------|-------|
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
|-------|-------|-------|

4) If necessary, modify your search (broaden, narrow, or change). Record the new search terms you used. What did you do? How did it change your results?

| | | |
|-------|-------|-------|
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
|-------|-------|-------|

5) Find one good article, and write down the citation. (Hint: citations include the author, article title, journal title, volume, issue, date, and page numbers)

6) If there are Library of Congress subject headings listed, note the ones that look most interesting.

7) Email the article or citation to yourself.

Lesson Plan: Using Your Literature Search Results to Narrow Your Research Paper Topic (Amanda Hemmesch)

Context: For my research paper assignment, my students' task is to consult the literature on nonverbal communication relevant to a situation of interest to them (e.g., job interviews, first dates), then provide helpful tips people could use to effectively communicate nonverbally in those situations.

Problem: Your potential topic for your paper is too vague or too complex; you are not finding relevant sources.

Potential solution: Topic selection and literature searching can be used together to explore ideas—it may be necessary to complete the process a few times before being ready to decide on a topic. Don't be discouraged—pick a general topic that is of interest, then keep at it and think creatively.

Conduct a quick search of the scholarly literature (e.g., using Brandeis Scholar, PsycInfo, or Academic Search Premier). Look at the first 20 or so citations in your list of search results. Look for key terms or authors that emerge in addition to the terms or authors for which you initially searched. Browse the abstracts of a few citations that appear potentially useful or interesting to see if you can identify any themes or directions that you didn't initially think of. Sometimes the best way to refine your ideas is to see what other people have to say about them!

Illustration: I walked them through an example in class to illustrate the process.

Initial topic: Deception

- Have students brainstorm and suggest keywords
- PsycInfo keyword search for "deception" (too broad), then "deception" and "law enforcement" (too narrow), then "nonverbal cues" and "deception" (about right)
 - Want a search to return approximately 100 or fewer citations -anything bigger is too vague
 - Different keywords can lead to different search results, so brainstorm alternate keywords and search them
 - Have students brainstorm other key terms based on the initial results of the search
 - Consider searching authors who look relevant (e.g., Ekman)
- Think about how the sources have changed your initial ideas about your research topic
 - Have students share their observations (e.g., noticed link to police/criminals in the "nonverbal cues and deception" search)

Refined research paper topic: Nonverbal cues for detecting deception that detectives could use when interviewing suspects

Note: This process also works in reverse, for example, if you wanted to begin with something like "detecting deception in children's court testimony," then broaden to something more general like "detecting deception in the judicial system." Plus, this exercise also introduces students to literature searching in addition to getting them to think about their topic relative to the scope of the paper.

Lesson Plan: Topic Narrowing (Kevin Doyle)

Lesson Objective: Help students distill the scope and the subject of the researched argument.

Assignment Sequence: This in-class exercise series should be conducted over the course of two days – the first, the day on which the research proposal is due; the second, the day on which the annotated bibliography is collected.

Preparations/Supplements:

- * Hacker, "Generat[ing] Ideas and Sketch[ing] a Plan," *Rules for Writers*, Sixth Edition
 - Hacker, "Conducting Research," *Rules for Writers*, Sixth Edition
 - Hacker, "Evaluating Sources," *Rules for Writers*, Sixth Edition
 - * Storey, "Getting Started," *Writing History: A Guide for Students*, 3rd Ed., p.3-16
 - Storey, "Interpreting Sources," *Writing History: A Guide for Students*, 3rd Ed., p. 17-25
- (Note: *Writing History* available at Brandeis Library, D16 .S864 1999)

Total Estimated Time: 25-55 minutes per class

On day one, organize the class into the peer review teams for the upcoming research workshop. Have these committees exchange and read proposals, discussing approaches, sources, and means (e.g. chronology, genre, geography) of narrowing proposals and topics. If possible, integrate this into a FLIP session or ask the class to bring laptops. Encourage the students to take notes.
(10-20 minutes)

After day one, as an instructor, read and annotate the research proposals, offering encouragement and raising questions that promote reflection and specificity. In addition, record a small number of topics for examination on day two, photocopying annotations, if need be.
(30-60 minutes)

On day two, return the annotated proposals. Then, ask the class how writing the annotated bibliographies helped lend direction and focus, recruiting and reviewing examples from volunteers.
(05-10 minutes)

This done, revisit the proposals selected above, leading a class discussion on ways of narrowing. Open Brandeis Scholar, <http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/>, and the library-built research web-site for the course, if not the *Encyclopedia Britannica* and the *Oxford English Dictionary*, online. Making use of the technology in the classroom, conduct this exercise as a research tutorial.
(10-20 minutes)

As always, conclude with a short review, concentrating on purposes and strategies of narrowing.
(03-05 minutes)

Lesson Plan: Reading Sources for Keyterms (Sandie Friedman, Princeton)

NOTE: This exercise can be easily adapted to teach the lens text(s) in your course. The analysis of keyterms in the lens text and the examination of the students' own writing can be split into two lessons.

Lesson Objective: For the class to take ownership of the concept of "keyterms," to use this concept to read their own work more analytically, and to begin planning steps for revision based upon what they've noticed. Students practice by using the concept of "keyterms" to analyze published texts, and then they apply what they have learned to their own writing.

Total estimated time: 80 minutes.

Additional outcomes: Students have a conversation that deepens their understanding of two theoretical texts, so they will probably feel more confident about incorporating these texts into their own essays. In their reading of Connerton, they also get to figure something out about incorporating outside sources--what works and what doesn't.

Assignment that is underway: Could be any, but would probably be most usefully introduced during essay #2, the comparison or "lens" essay.

Work completed before class: Students have written drafts of essay two and brought copies with them. They have read excerpts from Maurice Halbwachs' *On Collective Memory* and Paul Connerton's *How Societies Remember*.

In class:

Private writing. (5 min.)

Read Harvey's definition of keyterms and discuss its interesting features, especially implicit assumptions and clarity of meaning.

Keyterms: the recurring terms or basic oppositions that an argument rests upon, usually literal but sometimes a ruling metaphor. These terms usually imply certain **assumptions**—unstated beliefs about life, history, literature, reasoning, etc. that the essayist doesn't argue for but simply assumes to be true. An essay's keyterms should be clear in their meaning and appear throughout (not be abandoned half-way); they should be appropriate for the subject at hand (not unfair or too simple—a false or constraining opposition); and they should not be inert clichés or abstractions (e.g. "the evils of society"). The attendant assumptions should bear logical inspection, and if arguable they should be explicitly acknowledged.

Analysis of Halbwachs using keyterms.
(15 min.)

Consult with your neighbor and compile a list of 3-5 keyterms from Halbwachs.

Choose one keyterm or opposition and write for 5 minutes: How does Halbwachs define this term or opposition? What assumptions lie behind them? Why is it important for his overall argument?

Volunteers offer their definitions, which I put up on the board. As a class, we then try to establish connections among the keyterms.

Examining Connerton's adaptation of Halbwachs' keyterms.
(20 min)

Consult with your neighbor and identify two passages in Connerton where keyterms appear. Students volunteer these passages.

I choose one of the passages students have volunteered where Connerton is using some of Halbwach's terms. We read this passage out loud and discuss the language he uses to incorporate Halbwachs--it can get interesting here, because Connerton is practically plagiarizing at some points. We discuss what is problematic about, given what we are learning about proper use of sources.

3-5 minutes of writing: What can we take from Halbwachs and Connerton about the use of key terms? We hear some of these, and I put them on the board, perhaps in the form of principles.

Applying what they've learned to their own essays.
(20 min.)

Partners take seven minutes to read one another's essays for keyterms. (This means they won't read the whole essay, and that's fine.) Readers take notes about what the keyterms are and write definitions of them. Through their discussion of these notes, partners try to help each other identify what needs to be clarified, and where this clarification needs to come into the essay.

An alternative would be to ask students to write on the backs of their own essays for ten minutes or so: what are your keyterms, and how have you defined them? How are they related to/distinguished from the keyterms in your outside sources? Given the principles we have established, what do you still need to work on in clarifying or complicating your keyterms?

Lesson Plan on Applying a Lens: Using Tags to Contextualize (Danielle Coriale)

Lesson objective: To help students begin integrating secondary sources into their essays. Specifically, to show them *how* to provide the all-important context for quotations, paraphrasing, and summary of a specific text.

Total estimated time: 50 minutes

Additional outcomes: Students understand how to contextualize another person's ideas while effectively distinguishing those ideas from their own.

Assignment sequence: I generally do this during Unit 2, when students are learning how to apply a critical lens. Students will have already worked on how to summarize the argument made in the critical lens piece (i.e. ranking and carefully selecting *what* ideas to include in their summaries, all of which is covered in the section on Paraphrase and Summary in *Writing Analytically*, pp. 116-120).

Work completed before class: Students have written and handed in a summary of the critical lens piece (in this case, an excerpt from Susan Bordo's *Unbearable Weight*). In preparation for this workshop, I have students read the following:

- Section on Integrating Quotations in *Writing Analytically* (pp. 340-343)
- 2 of their classmates' summaries of the Bordo excerpt

Part I

Step 1: I ask students to read (on the overhead projector) the following sample summary, which contains no tags and provides no context. (5 min.)

Susan Bordo examines how advertisements create a way of thinking and use this ideology to sell products to women. The majority of advertisements feature slim, beautiful women who restrain their appetites and suppress their hunger. Bombarded with these representations constantly, real women hold themselves to this impossible standard. The ideology that this pattern suggests is unrealistic and therefore unhealthy for the female population who feels pressured to fit a certain image. However, the companies that circulate the advertisements rely on this insecurity to sell their products. Companies routinely create an idea and use it to sell products to millions of women they target with their advertisements.

Step 2: We discuss the summary and make a list of the problems it creates for readers trying to discern which ideas belong to Bordo and which belong to the author of the summary. (5 min.)

Step 3: I divide students into groups of 3, give them the following list of tags, and ask them to work together to find an appropriate place in the summary for each tag. (10 min.)

**Bordo claims that
she argues,
In her 1993 book, *Unbearable Weight*,**

**According to Bordo,
she is quick to point out that
Bordo notes that**

Step 4: I ask each group of 3 to read the new paragraph aloud, and I place my own paragraph on the overhead and have everyone read it together. (10 min.)

[In her 1993 book, *Unbearable Weight*,] Susan Bordo examines how advertisements create a way of thinking and use this ideology to sell products to women. **[Bordo notes that]** The majority of advertisements feature slim, beautiful women who restrain their appetites and suppress their hunger. Bombarded with these representations constantly, **[she argues,]** real women hold themselves to this impossible standard. **[Bordo claims that]** The ideology that this pattern suggests is unrealistic and therefore unhealthy for the female population who feels pressured to fit a certain image. However, **[she is quick to point out that]** the companies that circulate the advertisements rely on this insecurity to sell their products. **[According to Bordo,]** Companies routinely create an idea and use it to sell products to millions of women they target with their advertisements.

Step 5: We discuss the differences between the first version of this summary and the second, revised version. (5 min.)

Part II

Step 1: I give students a hand-out on summary writing (attached), which we go over together. (10 min.)

Step 2: I ask students to use one of the tags we've discussed in class to revise their own summaries. (5 min.)

Step 3: Students share their revised summaries. (time permitting.)

Step 4: I ask students to prepare for the next class by thinking of 3 new tags they might use when paraphrasing or summarizing Bordo's argument. I encourage them to take some risks and be more creative with this assignment.

Summary Writing Tips

When writing a summary, you are condensing a large body of material into a condensed form. That means you should try to avoid **descriptions** of what a person writes about. Be specific, use examples, and refer to the language the author uses to express an argument or an idea. A summary of someone's work should be thorough and concise **rather than general or vague**. Needless to say, this is difficult to do. Here are a few tips to help you write solid summaries:

- 1) Read through a text fully, making some marginal notes, before starting to figure out the main argument or the portion of the argument that you think is most important.
- 2) After you understand the key argument(s), write it in your own words.
- 3) In addition to the larger argument the author makes, try to give a sense of the central points, or claims, the author uses to form the argument. This is the difficult part, and it requires great

discernment. You want to be specific enough to avoid making vague statements, but you also don't want to describe each detail of the argument.

- 4) Be sure that when you first introduce the work, you include the author's full name, the title of his/her work (underlined or in *italics* if a full-length work; in "Quotation Marks" if it is an article or shorter work), and the publication year (if available). After introducing the work, use tags when summarizing someone's argument:

In her 2004 book, *Insert Title Here*, Author's Full Name **explains** why... X **argues** that... She also **claims** that... Despite **her suggestion** that, she later **shows**... At one point, she even **insists** that... Overall, X **avers** that... In the final portion of her argument, X **implies** that... by **stating** that, "Quotation" (page #). She also **notes** that...

The most consistent mistake I see in student papers is the absence of these tags, the keywords that let the reader know that we are still in the land of someone else's argument. Using these will make it crystal clear to your reader which portions of a paragraph are your OWN ideas, and which are the summarized ideas of others.

- 5) Avoid OVER-QUOTATION (we will discuss the use of quotation further in class).

Style and Grammar

Lesson Plan: Diction and Punctuation with Integrating Sources (Kevin Doyle)

Lesson Objective: Help students learn means of integrating sources with good diction and proper punctuation.

Assignment Sequence: This in-class exercise should be conducted in the wake of a workshop.

Preparations/Supplements:

Andrew Albin, "Working with Quotations"

Diana Hacker, *Rules for Writers*, 6E, companion website, 37-1

Gordon Harvey, "Elements of the Academic Essay"

"Academic Resources Center: Signal Phrases, Verbs for Signal Phrases"

"Reviewing an MLA Paper: Use of Sources"

Total Estimated Time: 20-40 minutes

Assign readings of Albin and Harvey on analysis, evidence, quotation, punctuation, and stitching before class. If time avails, assign a reading or two from Hacker, *Rules for Writers*.

Also, remind students to bring drafts of the current assignment to class.

Then, open section 37-1 of the grammar exercises on the companion website to the Hacker text. Example by example, ask the class to vote on the sentence that it believes executes proper punctuation. Be sure to recruit specific reasons for these votes and provide guidance in times of error. (5-10 minutes)

Next, distribute the "Academic Resources Center: Signal Phrases, Verbs for Signal Phrases" handout, guiding the class through a quick overview. At this point, reread aloud the Harvey definition of stitching. (5-10 minutes)

Next, have the class assemble into pairs or trios, asking each group to assess both the grammar and the stitching of its evidence, answering the following questions (you may want to make this into a worksheet to hand out):

Has your partner introduced the quote using signal phrases?

Could the quote be introduced more effectively?

Has your partner cited the source and punctuated the quotation correctly?

(5-10 minutes)

As always, conclude with a short review, focusing on punctuation and signaling the highlighting the importance of sentence structure and source integration—and pushing use of the Hacker text, if need be. In closing, distribute "Reviewing an MLA Paper: Use of Sources."

Reviewing an MLA Paper: Use of Sources

USE OF QUOTATIONS

- Is quoted material enclosed within quotation marks (unless it has been set off from the text)?
- Is quoted language word-for-word accurate? If not, do brackets or ellipsis marks indicate the changes or omissions?
- Does a clear signal phrase (usually naming the author) prepare readers for each quotation?
- Is each quotation documented with an in-text citation?

USE OF SUMMARIES AND PARAPHRASES

- Are summaries and paraphrases free of plagiarized wording—not copied or half-copied from the source?
- Are summaries and paraphrases documented with in-text citations?
- Do readers know where the material being cited begins? In other words, does a signal phrase mark the beginning of the cited material unless the context makes clear exactly what is being cited?

USE OF STATISTICS AND OTHER FACTS

- Are statistics and facts (other than common knowledge) documented with in-text citations?
- If there is no signal phrase, will readers understand exactly which facts are being cited?

Academic Resources Center: Signal Phrases

It is necessary not only to cite all sources but also to make clear which information comes from you and which comes from a source. Signal phrases help to introduce material borrowed from a reference. One word, a phrase, or a full sentence might be used to introduce the borrowed material. You can choose signal words to introduce a quotation, paraphrase or summary, keeping in mind that your word or phrasing choice can help to guide the reader into the idea of your source. For example, material paraphrased from a science journal might be introduced using the word “reported”: Morgan (1990) reported that genetic material could be relocated .

Signal phrases often incorporate verbs or verb phrases. The verb needs to fit the context, such as whether the source claims, argues, observes, concludes, refutes, or states. A list of verbs follows to assist you with thinking about possibilities for your own writing; should you use any of these words, be sure your selection fits the context.

Some Verbs to Use in Signal Phrases

| | | |
|---------------|--------------|------------|
| Acknowledges | Defines | Points out |
| Adds | Delineates | Posits |
| Admits | Denies | Presents |
| Advances | Discloses | Proposes |
| Affirms | Discounts | Purports |
| Agrees | Disputes | Reasons |
| Alludes | Documents | Recounts |
| Argues | Explains | Reflects |
| Asserts | Expresses | Refutes |
| Attests | Extrapolates | Reiterates |
| Characterizes | Grants | Relates |
| Chronicles | Highlights | Remarks |
| Claims | Hypothesizes | Replies |
| Comments | Illustrates | Reports |
| Compares | Implies | Responds |
| Concludes | Indicates | Reveals |
| Concurs | Insists | States |
| Confirms | Maintains | Submits |
| Contends | Narrates | Suggests |
| Contrasts | Negates | Supports |
| Creates | Notes | Theorizes |
| Declares | Observes | Writes |
| Emphasizes | Refers | Verifies |

Verbs for Signal Phrases

Use verbs that convey information about your source authors' attitudes or approaches. Also, remember to use the present tense of verbs to discuss the writings of others. Finally, keep in mind that these words are not synonyms of each other. In order to use the word properly, make sure you understand its meaning and how it affects the meaning of the quotation you are about to provide.

Author is neutral

| | | | |
|----------|-----------|------------|-------------|
| comments | describes | explains | illustrates |
| notes | observes | points out | records |
| relates | reports | says | sees |
| states | thinks | writes | |

Author interprets or suggests

| | | | |
|----------|------------|----------|-----------|
| analyzes | asks | assesses | concludes |
| finds | predicts | proposes | reveals |
| shows | speculates | suggests | supposes |

Author argues

| | | | |
|-----------|--------|----------|-----------|
| argues | claims | contends | defends |
| disagrees | holds | insists | maintains |

Author agrees

| | | | |
|--------|--------|----------|---------|
| admits | agrees | concedes | concurs |
| grants | | | |

Author is uneasy or critical

| | | | |
|-----------|------------|-----------|----------|
| belittles | bemoans | complains | condemns |
| deplores | deprecates | derides | laments |
| warns | | | |

This list does not exhaust all of the words that you can use to introduce quotations from sources in your writing. However, hopefully it will give you some options besides always having to say, "As so-and-so says..."

Student Writing with Sources

1 - From "Unlocking the Gold Rush's Full Potential: A Case for Abolishing Private Ownership of the Human Genome," by Gabe Collins

Existing US government patent laws require an innovation to possess four specific characteristics in order to be patentable: the invention must be "useful," "novel," "non-obvious," and must also be described in sufficient detail to enable one skilled in the field to use it for the stated purpose. When discoveries meet these criteria, the inventor may then enjoy exclusive rights to his creation for 20 subsequent years. These proprietary rights include preventing others from using the new item, dictating the conditions of its use, and/or collecting royalties from users.¹ These rights help lubricate the commercialization of research because inventors can openly share their inventions without fear of their idea being imitated without due compensation. Industries based primarily on intellectual capital, such as biotech, rely especially heavily on patents' safeguarding influence.

2 - From "Normalcy and Catastrophe: The Effect of Loss on Identity" by Melissa Galvez

According to most definitions, consciousness is seen as awareness of self, and this is indeed an essential part of the process. But as Damasio argues throughout his book, consciousness arises from the *relationship* between an organism and some other object that the organism is perceiving. Core and extended consciousness describe the intricacy of the relationship between the organism and the object. There are thus many ways to be conscious of something—conscious of its existence in the world of you, the self; conscious of its meaning in general; and conscious of its specific meaning to you. Though, according to Damasio, core and extended consciousness occur nearly simultaneously in a healthy human brain, it is possible to break down the process into discrete steps in order to understand it.

3 - From "Testing Normality as a Criterion for Genetic Enhancement" by Varun K. Phadke

The International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) Committee for the Ethical Aspects of Human Reproduction has attempted to clarify the concept of genetic enhancement in its "Ethical Guidelines Regarding Altering Genes in Humans," stating that "Non-therapeutic Genetic Alteration (Genetic Enhancement) [...] involves the attempt to enhance or improve an already healthy genetic makeup by inserting a gene for improvement (for example, height, intelligence, eye colour)"; from this, they concluded that "research in human subjects involving the alteration of DNA for enhancement purposes is not ethically acceptable and therefore should not be permitted."² The Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) of Canada posited an even more explicit interpretation in Section 8 of its "Tri-Council Policy Statement [on the] Ethical Conduct for Research Concerning Humans," stating that "The aim of genetic research should be to advance knowledge or to alleviate disease, not to "improve" or "enhance" a population by cosmetic manipulation."³ More importantly, in order to make this distinction, the statements also implicitly insinuate what constitutes normality. However, this particular criterion for the distinction is both ambiguous and inherently flawed, for three specific reasons. Firstly, the statements have associated the umbrella term of non-therapeutic genetic enhancement solely with "cosmetic" alteration, a

¹US Department of Energy. "Genetics and Patenting." <http://www.ornl.gov/hgmis/elsi/patents.html>. 2002. Internet Explorer.

²"Ethical Guidelines Regarding Altering Genes in Humans," [The FIGO Committee for the Study of Ethical Aspects of Human Reproduction](http://www.md.huji.ac.il/figo/figo19.htm), 26 October 1996, FIGO, 20 April 2002 <<http://www.md.huji.ac.il/figo/figo19.htm>>.

³"Article 8.5, Section 8," [Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans](http://www.nserc.ca/programs/ethics/english/sec08.htm#D), 21 November 2000, National Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, 20 April 2002 <<http://www.nserc.ca/programs/ethics/english/sec08.htm#D>>.

designation that is rather myopic given that non-therapeutic enhancement is the principal motivation for many clinical methodologies. Secondly, any definition of normality will ultimately hinge upon a standard of reference that will be undoubtedly arbitrary. Thirdly, one cannot put forth rigid definitions for a concept that has much broader implications than the relatively specific context of genetic intervention, especially since the idea of normality has significant implications for the perception of the practice of medicine and perhaps even our own mortality. Because the criterion of normality fails to take into account these outstanding issues, to base a distinction between genetic enhancement and gene therapy on this concept is ineffectual and perhaps even unjustified.

4 - From "Horse Sense: Are Equines Intelligent?" by Heather Gilmartin

In this context, Budiansky introduces the idea that, with regard to animals, "it behooves us to do a sort of zero-based budgeting, and to consider all the functions that an animal's brain is called upon to perform before we pass judgment on its mental ranking in the animal kingdom" (Budiansky, 1997). Taking into consideration all mental processes, even the instinctive ones, creates a more level playing field on which evaluation of intelligence can take place. Since different species have evolved various specializations and instinctive, stereotyped responses to their diverse environments, and since these behaviors make up a large portion of the effective solutions to given situations, it no longer remains wise to discount them when evaluating intelligence. On this new playing field, intelligence can be defined as the ability to formulate effective solutions to varying environmental conditions regardless of the method used to produce a solution (Budiansky, 1997). The level playing field thus provides another way of thinking about animal intelligence; because it defines intelligence based on any way of solving a problem, it weighs all solutions equally, without a bias toward humans. Using this definition and the level-playing-field concept, humans can categorize animal intelligence in an un-anthropocentric manner, thus gaining an appreciation of the real (not necessarily human-like) intelligence that exists throughout the animal kingdom.

Style & Grammar

Exercise #1 – Active Verbs for Your Course (Ryan Wepler)

Getting students to write with active verbs will increase both the precision of their arguments and the overall quality of their prose. One reason students fall back on forms of “to be” so often is because they cannot think of more precise words to use in its place. This exercise not encourages students to pursue alternatives to “to be,” but it also provides them with a handout to which they can refer for the remainder of the semester.

1. Discuss a short passage from a course text that is pertinent to the topic of your course.
2. Write whatever conclusion your class draws about that passage on the board as a single sentence with a blank space left where the verb would go.
3. Ask your students to write a verb that could logically fill in the blank on a piece of scrap paper.
4. Ask students to share their verbs (write them on the board).
5. Tell students, that you are going to revise the “Active Verbs for Discussing Ideas” handout (see the following page) into an “Active Verbs for Discussing [the topic of your course]” handout.
6. Ask students to write down ten other verbs that could be used in an analytical essay written on the topic of your course (you might clarify that they do not all have to fit in the blank in the sentence on the board).
7. Write them on the board as students share their answers. Make sure every student shares at least one verb.
8. At the conclusion of the discussion, collect the individual lists your students made and create a handout of the verbs to distribute in class and post on LATTE.

The handout you create from this exercise can be applied to students’ work immediately. For example, you could require them to use (and underline) six of the active verbs on your handout in an upcoming pre-draft exercise.

This exercise typically takes 20-30 minutes, depending on the length of the discussion in step 1.

Active Verbs for Discussing Ideas

| | | | |
|--------------|------------------|-------------|---------------|
| informs | protects | cautions | confronts |
| reviews | insists | shares | regards |
| argues | handles | convinces | toys with |
| states | confuses | declares | hypothesizes |
| synthesizes | intimates | ratifies | suggests |
| asserts | simplifies | analyzes | contradicts |
| claims | narrates | affirms | considers |
| answers | outlines | exaggerates | highlights |
| responds | allows | observes | disconfirms |
| critiques | initiates | substitutes | admires |
| explains | asserts | perceives | endorses |
| illuminates | supports | resolves | uncovers |
| determines | compares | assaults | hesitates |
| challenges | disputes | denies | distinguishes |
| experiments | describes | conflates | refutes |
| experiences | assists | retorts | assembles |
| pleads | sees | reconciles | demands |
| defends | persuades | complicates | criticizes |
| rejects | lists | urges | negates |
| reconsiders | quotes | reads | diminishes |
| verifies | exposes | parses | shows |
| announces | warns | concludes | supplements |
| provides | believes | stresses | accepts |
| formulates | categorizes | facilitates | buttresses |
| qualifies | disregards | contrasts | relinquishes |
| hints | tests | discusses | treats |
| repudiates | postulates | guides | clarifies |
| infers | proposes | grants | acknowledges |
| marshals | defies | points out | insinuates |
| summarizes | accepts | judges | identifies |
| disagrees | emphasizes | enumerates | explains |
| rationalizes | confirms | reveals | interprets |
| shifts | praises condemns | adds | |
| maintains | supplies | implies | reminds |
| persists | seeks | | |

Source: Reproduced with permission of Cinthia Gannett.

Exercise #2 – Postcard Exercise on Diction (Daniela Kukrechtova)

Each of you has received a picture postcard. Describe the picture on this postcard according to the following rules:

- use exactly 90 words; no more, no less.
- do not refer to the postcard itself ("This is a picture of two men")
- do not use any [instances of the verb 'to be'](#) (see the list with “forbidden” verbs, p.2 of this handout)
- **NOTE:** You are ***not*** telling a story about the people in the postcard -- Describe them physically, but do not speculate about their thoughts, motives, or other things you cannot support with concrete detail from the picture.

Purpose of the Assignment

By limiting word count, you become more aware of word choice. You get only 90 words, clearly too few, so you must select the very best 90 words, wasting none.

By eliminating the verb 'to be', you become more aware of the power of strong verbs. 'To be' constructions tend to subordinate the actual information of the sentence:

original sentence: "There is a man who is waltzing by himself under a bridge."

corrected sentence: "Under a bridge, a man waltzes by himself."

Notice that the corrected sentence uses only eight words, while the original uses eleven. Better use of modifiers (use the adverb 'alone' or the adjective 'lone' to eliminate the phrase 'by himself') could tighten the sentence further.

By avoiding reference to the postcard itself, you become better aware of the assignment. You are to describe the contents of the postcard. The assignment does not express interest in the postcard medium. By remaining on task, you eliminate spurious descriptive content, saving words.

PLEASE: Do not lose or damage the postcard. Do not write on the back (or front) of it. I will collect the postcards after the exercise is over.

Exercise #3 – Working on Tone and Style (Jessie Stickgold-Sarah)

The goal: Help students identify tone and articulate the relationship between tone/writing style and reader response. This exercise can also be a starting point for talking about audience.

Part one:

I ask each student to think of a negative experience, and then to narrate it in two emotional paragraphs. When they're finished, students read individual sentences aloud and the class names the emotional response those sentences create, and what particular words or phrases create that effect.

Part two:

I hand out passages from two different personal essays, one written with emotional language, one more formally. For the first I generally use an excerpt from Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* because my students have reacted strongly to it when it's assigned in class; for the second I've used bell hooks's *keeping close to home*. The choice would depend on the focus of your class.

In small groups (three or four) students do the same analysis they did in part one: read the first (emotional) passage, name the response and the personal topic, find words and phrases that create that feeling and say why. Next, they read the second (formal) passage, name the response and personal topic, then try to find words and phrases that *don't* sound emotional. Each group reports back to the class. If time permits, students might rewrite one passage to be either more or less emotional.

Exercise #4 – Correcting Students’ Own “Loser Sentences”

While grading or reading rough drafts find a loser sentence in each one of your students’ drafts (see the handout on the following page) and type it into a worksheet. Strive for as many different kinds of loser sentences as possible. Using one sentence from every student will ensure that no student feels singled out. Correct the first few as a class and ask students to correct the rest in small groups. When you reconvene ask the groups to read their corrections aloud and compare them.

How to Spot a Loser Sentence . . .

You need to train yourself to spot loser sentences—sentences that don’t just don’t deliver or that deliver awkwardly—and to revise these sentences. The secret to revising sentences is to read your prose out loud: if your sentences can pass “the conversation test,” you’re doing okay. When you rewrite, ask yourself what you’re trying to say, then work at saying it!

Here are some common problems:

- abstract subject (so the reader can’t grasp the meaning),
- passive voice or weak verbs,
- lack of clarity,
- wordiness, lack of conciseness,
- official style (high diction, ponderous nouns, weak verbs, strings of prepositions),
- sentence compression,
- inanity, superficiality,
- grammatical and punctuation mistakes.

When you rewrite, ask yourself what the writer is trying to say, then just say it!

1. People around the world watch William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* time and time again.
2. By the end of the play, Hamlet is indisputably a man of incredible strength and deep thought (especially when foiled against his initial adolescence), able to apply the horse-power that is hinted at throughout the play, but is never fully realized.
3. This fourth soliloquy, by reexamining the aforementioned themes of vengeance and action, shows a major change in Hamlet.
4. The most base reason for this cut is simple: in a play that , uncut, would run for four hours, directors frequently feel justified in excising the character of Fortinbras—nephew to Old Norway, and perhaps Hamlet’s most notorious foil, with whom this forth soliloquy, beginning “How all occasions do in form against me”, primarily deals—from the play entirely.
5. He has not yet gotten blood on his hands, but he is mulling over the permutations thereof.
6. The soliloquy that the titular prince delivers at the end of Act II, Scene 2 ranks highly amongst those most indivisible portions of the play.
7. Hamlet conflicts with whether to put the crux to death or to let it live.
8. The size and destruction one ambition causes finally jars Hamlet into action.

Loser Sentences from Student Essays

It's definitely a good sign that so many people are getting into what's happening in today's world and that's because of the Internet.

Because it's so funny in talking about things today, the Simpsons as a tv show has been pretty successful for years and this really shows how important it is.

Marketers know what they're doing when they create ads because they use their marketing skills to sell products to people.

The documentary, *Merchants of Cool*, brings up a lot of good points that are hard to argue with, like how MTV markets to kids and kids copy MTV, even though maybe what the kids are copying is stuff that is not so good.

MTV's *The Real World* makes it seem like people who are our age are only interested in drinking beer and getting into hot-tubs.

PETA's website is so filled with gross images that it makes someone feel bad for the animals who died for things like testing products or someone's dinner.

Especially in the scene where he's looking at a furniture catalog and feeling bad about his life, the movie *Fight Club* shows how bad a consumer culture can be.

There are many things about the movie *Million Dollar Baby* that can sort of relate to the American Dream idea, which could've been why it got an Oscar.

Exercise #5 – Identifying Lackluster Sentences (Tina Van Kley)

I'm uncomfortable with asking students to identify "loser" sentences, so I modified the characterization, and have added a few sentences from my own students' papers.

Otherwise, the procedure is exactly as specified in the other exercise.

Characteristics of Lackluster Sentences:

- Abstract subject (so the reader can't grasp the meaning)
- Passive voice, or weak verbs
- Lack of clarity
- Wordiness, lack of conciseness
- Officious style (high diction, ponderous nouns, weak verbs, strings of prepositions)
- Sentence compression
- Inanity, superficiality
- Grammatical and punctuation mistakes

Examples for correction:

1. It's definitely a good sign that so many people are getting into what's happening in today's world and that's because of the Internet.
2. The documentary, *Merchants of Cool*, brings up a lot of good points that are hard to argue with, like how MTV markets to kids and kids copy MTV, even though maybe what the kids are copying is stuff that is not so good.
3. Especially in the scene where he's looking at a furniture catalog and feeling bad about his life, the movie *Fight Club* shows how bad a consumer culture can be.
4. What is particularly interesting about this progression is the way that it can be read as a metaphor.
5. Dream are of course what you do when you sleep, but the other meaning of dreams, your aspirations, goals, and desires, is often something that appears in your dreams, particularly in literature, where dreams are a common metaphorical device.
6. Swift is clearly demonstrating through Corinna that exterior beauty can be created and as a result is inherently "artificial" but there are larger implications to this idea as well.

Exercise #6 – Balderdash (The Ohio State Writing Program)

This activity is based on the popular board game by the same name, and emphasizes to students the importance of style, tone, and authorial voice in their own writing.

- Give your class two words that you are fairly certain they do not know (just about anything out of the Bedford Glossary will work).
- Ask your students to write a fake definition for each word, asking them to keep in mind the things that they would typically see in a dictionary definition (this can also work in small groups).
- After students have completed their definitions, have them share their definitions with the class. Decide as a group which definition seems most convincing and why.
- Then have a discussion with your class about the genre of dictionary definitions as well as the genre of academic writing. You can emphasize to your class that there are certain conventions that academics expect to see in each others' writing, just as there are certain conventions that we expect in dictionary definitions. You can also discuss the style of writing that they employed in their definitions, and use this as a springboard for a larger discussion about style.
- You may want to give them the real definitions for the words, although they might not care much.

Estimated Time: 20 minutes

Skills: Genre conventions, style

Exercise #7 – Sentence Structure Activity (The Ohio State Writing Program)

Why this may be useful in your class: If your students start all of their sentences in the same way (i.e., “There are...”; “It seems...”), this can be a useful way to force students out of their normal sentence patterns.

Time: 15 mins.

What you need: Quite a bit of chalkboard space and chalk, or you can use the computer/projector in your classroom.

What to do:

1. Write two sentences on the board in large print – if you have more than one board, write a different sentence on each. Choose fairly simple sentences that have little detail. Two that have always worked for me are: “I will never forget you” and “There are two kids over by the fence.”
2. Ask students to spend about five to ten minutes writing five new sentences for each original sentence (for a total of ten). Their new sentences can re-arrange word order or add detail, but the sentence must retain the meaning of the original.
3. Ask students to choose their two best sentences when they are finished. As soon as they have chosen, ask them to write their two best on the board (you may want them to write their new sentences on the same board as the corresponding original).
4. After all the sentences are up, have your class look for matches – cross of duplicates that you find. There are usually hardly any duplicates for this, so the point is to show your students how many ways there are to say one thing.

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Exercise #8 – Correcting Slang, Clichés, and Informal Language (The Ohio State Writing Program)

Skills: Identifying and fixing informal language

Time: 15 minutes

This activity helps your students identify informal language, and gives them an opportunity to learn how to fix it.

1. Conduct a large group discussion about slang, clichés, and informal language. Where is it appropriate/inappropriate? Where is it effective/ineffective?
2. Give your class 4-5 sentences that contain informal language (you can draw these anonymously from their papers, make them up yourself, or use the examples below).
3. Break the class into groups of 3 or 4 and ask them to identify the informal language in the sentences. Then have your students rephrase the sentence in more formal or academic language.

Sample Sentences

Daisy may come across to the rest of society as a “coquette” but she knows very well that she is not and she has only one man on her mind.

Mrs. Walker approaches her one day in an attempt to get her off the streets.

As we all know, the four pillars of womanhood was the law of the ladies in this time.

Variation #1 – Do the opposite!: Find a sentence or two that is very academic or serious and ask the students to rephrase using only clichés or slang.

Exercise #9 – The All Purpose Writing Activity (The Ohio State Writing Program)

Why this may be useful in your class: This activity brings together a lot of writing skills: organization, transitions, and sentence structure. It also places writing constraints on students that will force them to write stylistically weak sentences that they can then revise for style later when the constraints are removed.

What you need: Prepared writing prompts (maybe on an index card).

Timing: This exercise will take most of a 50 minute class period.

What to do:

1. Divide your class up into groups of four – any more than this and the activity gets even more difficult.
2. Distribute an index card to each group with a writing prompt on it. You can make these prompts cover different kinds of writing: for example, I might give a group a card that says, “Write about a family doctor that is retiring after 35 years of work.” Another group might have a more expository prompt, like “Write about what it takes to be a successful student at OSU.” Good prompts make this activity work – so try and come up with things that will be funny/interesting/challenging.
3. Tell students that they are to compose a piece of writing on that topic. The catch is that every sentence of their piece must use a new letter of the alphabet (think acrostic poetry). It gets even more difficult if you require that the letters be consecutive (i.e. the first sentence begins with “A,” the second with “B,” &c.). If you want, you can invent a new constraint that will force your students to write stylistically weak sentences.
4. Allow students to try this in a number of ways – they can try using the letters in sequence, or they can cross off letters as they go along.
5. The initial composition takes a good twenty minutes. After they think they are done, tell them they have five minutes to revise their piece. In their revision, they are allowed to combine some of their original sentences and separate paragraphs, etc. Teacher then moves students as a large group to consider ranking their lists and models how to move from lists to interpretation. [15 minutes]
6. Have groups share their final product (if you offer them an extra point on homework for using the letter “x,” things get really inventive).

Exercise #10 – Expelling Clichés from Student Writing (Kyle Wiggins)

Students lean on clichéd phrases when their argument is wobbly or unnecessarily safe. In the former case, the writer often lacks confidence or the critical vocabulary needed to stabilize a complex argument. He or she uses trite truisms to reach conclusions outside of their analytic grasp. This strategy stunts innovative thinking and usually undoes the ambition of the essay's controlling idea. In the second case, the writer hasn't hazarded anything of him or herself in the argument. Abundant clichés indicate that nothing new is being proven in this essay.

Regardless of the motivation, clichés have to go. This simple group exercise familiarizes the student writer with the empty language associated with their essay topic and identifies where that language invades their writing.

What to do:

1. Match each student with a partner. Ask the students to briefly explain their essay topics and theses to one another. They may read their thesis statement directly from the draft, or you may ask them to recreate the thesis from memory.
2. After both students have summarized their respective essay claims, ask them to exchange drafts. On the back of their partner's essay, students should list ALL of the clichéd statements, phrases, or conclusions they can think of about their partner's topic. The list may consist of simple slogans, truisms, aphorisms, and complete sentences, but should focus on worn out ideas endemic to the topic.
3. When both students complete their lists, ask them to return the draft to its rightful owner. Each student should read his/her partner's list. Then, with an eye for those clichés listed, circle every instance in which one appears in the essay.

Now every student has a catalogue of sentences requiring revision. If you wish to extend the exercise, ask writers to construct a counter list of precise phrases or ideas that could substitute for lazy, clichéd writing. This activity forces writing to generate their own set of key terms rather than rely on axioms forced in the class or in "society" (ugh). Most importantly, the cliché exercise gets students thinking about audience and the implied intelligent reader of the essay.

Exercise #11 – Comma Exercise (Jeremy Spindler)

1. Have the students read p. 259-268 in A Writer's Reference before coming to class. On the next page is a summary of the guidelines regarding commas you can distribute to your students.
2. In class, or at home, have the students complete the exercise on the following page.

Corrected paragraph:

In the 1930s and 1940s when the first urban folk boom occurred in the United States, this definition was given a more political bent. Folklorists like Alan Lomax were disturbed by the mass merchandising of popular song through radio, phonograph recordings, and sheet music. Music was being imposed on the people, rather than welling up from among them. For Lomax, folk music represented the democratic "voice of the people," enabling them to express their views on politics, social conditions, and racial inequality. Lomax and his cohorts were equally disturbed by the notion that music making was limited to a talented few. Anyone could be a folk musician in their view. Thus, polished performance became suspect because it indicated that the performer had been exposed to musical training. Technical proficiency was to be shunned in order to make music accessible to all.

3. Compare their answers with the actual paragraph taken from the text and discuss.

Comma Usage Guidelines

1. Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction joining *independent clauses*. (*and, but, or, nor, for, so, and yet*).
2. Use a comma after an introductory word group.
3. Use a comma between *all* items in a series (including after the last item).
4. Use a comma between coordinate adjectives not joined by *and*. Do not use a comma between cumulative adjectives. They are coordinate if *and* can be placed between them and modify the noun separately.
5. Use commas to set off *nonrestrictive* elements. A *restrictive* element is integral to the meaning of the sentence and therefore does not need a comma. A *nonrestrictive* element is not integral to the sentence. The comma shows this.
6. Use commas to set off *transitional* and *parenthetical expressions, absolute phrases, and contrasted elements*.
7. Use commas to set off nouns of direct address, the words *yes* and *no*, interrogative tags, and mild interjections.
8. Use commas with expressions such as *he said* to set off direct quotations.
9. Use commas with dates, addresses, titles, and numbers.
10. Use a comma to prevent confusion.

Supply the commas

There are 9 commas missing from the following paragraph. Insert the commas into the appropriate places and identify which guideline applies to that particular usage.

Note: If you feel that nine commas are not enough you may use additional commas, or perhaps there are too many. We will compare our paragraphs to the actual paragraph and analyze how context and meaning can change simply by adding or removing a comma.

From "The Good, The Bad, and the Folk," by Richard Carlin. Presented in Bad Music: The Music We Love to Hate, Pg. 175.

In the 1930s and 1940s when the first urban folk boom occurred in the United States this definition was given a more political bent. Folklorists like Alan Lomax were disturbed by the mass merchandising of popular song through radio phonograph recordings and sheet music. Music was being imposed on the people rather than welling up from among them. For Lomax folk music represented the democratic "voice of the people" enabling them to express their views on politics social conditions and racial inequality. Lomax and his cohorts were equally disturbed by the notion that music making was limited to a talented few. Anyone could be a folk musician in their view. Thus polished performance became suspect because it indicated that the performer had been exposed to musical training. Technical proficiency was to be shunned in order to make music accessible to all.

Exercise #12 – Putting Punctuation into Practice (Steve Plunkett)

I devote one entire class session in the research unit to colons, dashes, semicolons, and commas. The exercise part of it involves sentences--tailored to the research projects of individual students in the class--with all internal punctuation removed. Some are ambiguous (a colon or semicolon or dash could be equally grammatically correct) and some are not, and my point is both to reinforce acceptable use of punctuation and to stress that punctuation can have an effect upon style and meaning that is up to the individual writer.

Once we've moved through that part of the exercise I distribute the second page, which has sample introductory paragraphs. These paragraphs again discuss particular projects my students are pursuing, and they are more or less grammatically correct but otherwise pretty bad. I then close the session by asking them to use adjusted punctuation to get them into more readable shape, helping them see how the union or disunion of dependent and independent clauses can significantly change readability and style.

Then I distribute the "Commas, Colons, Semicolons, and Dashes: A User's Guide" handout and go over the items on it with the students. I reinforce this lesson by demanding in the prompt for the third essay that each student use one colon, semicolon, summary dash, and pair of dashes in their final draft--I also make that an item they must cover in their peer review groups. I have had a number of students change the way they punctuate as a direct result of showing them sentences addressing their specific research question that have been punctuated differently or poorly.

Punctuation, Style, and Meaning

Insert the missing internal punctuation in each sentence below to make the sentences meaningful and grammatically correct.

Mike Meyers had one simple goal with *Wayne's World* to make Van Halen relevant again.

It is no simple thing to satirize an election season that has given me as much joy as this one it is no light undertaking to risk the ire of commentators so hyperbolic as these.

It may be that Parker and Stone chose to call their fictional town South Park because the name is so generic a quick search turns up South Park Maine Middle Park Ohio Western Parks New Mexico and High Park Ontario.

On the other hand Swift may have chosen Psalamanzar as a figure for ridicule for a very different reason Psalmanazar failed to tip a young Swift when the latter was an up-and-coming hat check attendant.

Don Knotts did not view the critical success of *Pleasantville* as an unqualified source of joy in fact he became increasingly obsessed with making viewers appreciate his other performances particularly Ralph Furley on *Three's Company* he considered the latter role as his crowning achievement as a thespian.

Heller did not view the early success of *Catch-22* as an unqualified source of joy in fact he became increasingly obsessed with making reviewers appreciate his subsequent efforts this eventually caused him to sit in a tree in his front yard wearing only his Pulitzer Prize.

Contrary to popular belief Stephen Colbert did not begin deliberately mispronouncing his name when he developed his famous alter ego he had begun doing so years earlier out of respect for his deceased father but it is interesting to note how such a quirk is consistent with other attributes of the Colbert character.

There's a considerable amount of evidence that recognition by one's peers does not make one any happier one handy statistic might be the frequency with which the most celebrated and credentialed economists go mad and indeed the stress to perform might be what does them in.

Find at least one other way to arrange the following four passages. What happens when you take a long sentence apart, or string shorter ones together? Take note of what each construction does to the effect the sentence or sentences on you as a reader.

It seems important that many people believe that cartoonist Tom Toles is the cartoonist behind *The Onion*'s editorial cartoons. These cartoons are attributed to a cartoonist named "Kelly." Kelly does not exist, though. He is the creation of cartoonist Ward Sutton. There are many similarities between Kelly's fake cartoons and Toles's real ones. Toles includes a caricature of himself in the margins commenting on the cartoon. Kelly does the same. Kelly makes fun of *The Washington Post* (he is supposedly a conservative, but mocks conservatives using Frye's irony). Toles works for *The Washington Post*. The difference between them is that their politics are diametrically opposed.

Many observers dismiss the cultural significance of George Romero's zombie films, and by doing so they misunderstand the importance of subsequent works that rework Romero's themes—such is the case with Edgar Wright's *Shaun of the Dead*, which constitutes a significant reexamination of Romero's themes and a bold statement that Romero be taken seriously as a filmmaker—a move that betrays the danger of snobbish attitudes toward film: it may not be too much to say that *Shaun of the Dead* represents the future of world cinema, something viewers miss when they see it as simple parody.

In this paper I shall argue that modern academics' need to demonstrate mastery of a specific field of knowledge—something they feel that they must do in order to speak as authorities about anything (since their training demands that mastery precede action)—is precisely what makes them a fit target for ridicule by those who live outside of their particular context: their discipline-specific jargon results in their inability to say anything to the wider world.

The Daily Show and *Saturday Night Live* seem at first to be quite different. After all, Jon Stewart works alone as a mock-news anchor, while the stars of *SNL* work together in a variety of skits in all different formats. But they're not so different underneath it all. Both the movie and the show are examples of satire. *The Daily Show* mocks the conventions of news shows, while *Saturday Night Live* mocks all variety of media. And what's more, both satires often also take on American politics and try to be even-handed in doing so. While you might be tempted to call *The Daily Show* cruel and *Saturday Night Live* gentle, you would be mistaken. Both shows have ways of interspersing cruelty and kindness.

Commas, Colons, Semicolons, and Dashes: A User's Guide

In broad terms, **commas** separate the elements of a sentence into distinct, manageable segments in order to preserve meaning. Often, this means offsetting introductory words and phrases, separating independent clauses linked by a coordinating conjunction, separating an aside from the rest of a sentence, and separating words or phrases in a list of two or more items. You no doubt have a clear knowledge of when to use commas, even if you're unfamiliar with some of the jargon above. We begin with commas simply because they can be useful when bringing attention to the other bits of punctuation we'll be examining.

Sometimes, I lay awake late at night thinking about dangling modifiers.

The lecture was over, but so great was the students' desire to work with punctuation that they refused to leave.

The old professor, who was by that time quite mad, locked himself up in the attic and refused to do anything other than diagram sentences.

Any writer seeking to produce a stylistically varied essay must know when to employ commas, colons, semicolons, and dashes.

Colons always link an independent clause to a second clause, word, or phrase that explains or clarifies the first part of the sentence. What follows the colon may or may not be able to stand on its own as a sentence, but the purpose of the colon is always to present information that will explain or clarify the beginning of the sentence.

One haunting thought inevitably kept me from sleep: a dangling modifier might be out there somewhere in the darkness, confusing readers and making meaning unclear.

The police negotiator was baffled by the students' lone demand: a lecture about grammar.

The walls were covered with an orderly scrawl that confirmed the doctor's worst fear: the old professor had gone mad.

A scholar interested in stylistic variety must make uses of the following: commas, colons, semicolons, and dashes.

Semicolons most often link two strongly related clauses that could each stand on their own as separate sentences. In such cases, it does not matter whether one clause explains or clarifies the other; in fact, there are many cases where the use of either punctuation mark would be equally appropriate. Semicolons also link items in a list that contain commas. Despite what you may fear, you probably have a very good idea of when to use semicolons already.

Dangling modifiers alone were the cause of my anxiety; I felt I could take most anything the English language could throw at me, except for those hideous swaths of misplaced words.

Although this was the first time the professor had been taken hostage by a group of students, she was hardly surprised; in fact, she had been waiting for this moment since the second week of the semester.

We can identify the professor's multiple personalities by looking at the colors of ink he used: red stands for Heimlich, the composer; green means that he was Evelyn, the magazine editor; yellow indicates Rodrigo, the sous-chef; and purple must mean Charlemagne, the medieval monarch.

Learning the rules of punctuation is the easy work of a single afternoon; applying those rules effectively is the task of a lifetime.

Dashes are a little trickier—they can replace commas and colons quite freely. However, the essential thing to remember is that the dash very strongly separates what comes after it from what comes before. Generally, dashes offset an aside or summarize what comes before them. Because they are so visually striking, you should use them sparingly.

I can't say why dangling modifiers bother me so—I can handle comma splices, split infinitives, and misplaced prepositions with ease—but there's no getting away from the fact that they do.

Whether you believe the students were unnaturally obsessed with grammar, simply motivated out of boredom, part of a wider coordinated effort, or the victims of a mass hallucination—however you make sense of those terrible days in November, you cannot deny that the Semicolon Five changed American punctuation forever.

I didn't know what to make of the old professor's advice—he was mad after all—but I did like getting a compliment now and again.

You have now learned the rules governing commas, colons, semicolons, and dashes—what happens next is up to you.

Exercise #13 – Celebrating the Semicolon in a Most Unlikely Location

It was nearly hidden on a New York City Transit public service placard exhorting subway riders not to leave their newspaper behind when they get off the train. “Please put it in a trash can,” riders are reminded. After which Neil Neches, an erudite writer in the transit agency’s marketing and service information department, inserted a semicolon. The rest of the sentence reads, “that’s good news for everyone.”

Semicolon sightings in the city are unusual, period, much less in exhortations drafted by committees of civil servants. In literature and journalism, not to mention in advertising, the semicolon has been largely jettisoned as a pretentious anachronism. Americans, in particular, prefer shorter sentences without, as style books advise, that distinct division between statements that are closely related but require a separation more prolonged than a conjunction and more emphatic than a comma. “When Hemingway killed himself he put a period at the end of his life,” Kurt Vonnegut once said. “Old age is more like a semicolon.”

In terms of punctuation, semicolons signal something New Yorkers rarely do. Frank McCourt, the writer and former English teacher at Stuyvesant High School, describes the semicolon as the yellow traffic light of a “New York sentence.” In response, most New Yorkers accelerate; they don’t pause to contemplate.

—SAM ROBERTS, *The New York Times Online* (February 18, 2008)

Ask your students to:

- find a sentence that explains the proper use of the semicolon
- write out two/three descriptions of the difference between the use of period, comma, semicolon
- find and write out the sentence that the article is talking about; make sure to put the semicolon in
- based on the descriptions in the article, why does this sentence require a semicolon?

Then:

- give proper technical explanation: semicolon joins two independent clauses
- ask students to work in pairs on a paragraph from a *Write Now* essay: find a sentence in which the writer uses a comma to separate two independent clauses. Turn it into a semicolon, noting the changes/omissions you’d have to make. Do the same with a sentence where the writer used a period rather than a semicolon. Find a sentence in which the writer does use the semicolon. Is it used properly? If no, correct it. If yes, how else could you write the sentence?
- review a few in class

Exercise #14 – Passive Voice & Weak Verbs (Cory Nelson)

Time: 20 minutes (approx.)

Assignment underway: any; students should have a draft in hand

Step 1: Write a sentence on the board in the passive voice. I usually choose something provocative, like “The Rwandan genocide was committed.” Ask students to identify the problems with this sentence and develop a definition of the passive voice. Some points I like students to take away from this discussion:

- The passive voice allows writers to hide inside their own sentences
- The passive voice can be a stylistic problem, an informational problem, and in extreme cases, an ethical problem. In student writing, it usually stems from an informational problem; writers rely on the passive voice when they do not have enough evidence to make a certain statement (“women were oppressed for centuries...”)
- Ask journalistic questions to eliminate the passive voice: who, what, when, where, why

Step 2: Send around a handout with several sentences that rely on weak verbs (forms of “to be”). I take these from the handout in the current UWS exercise book. Discuss with students why they should avoid relying on weak verbs. The take home points include:

- Stylistically, it becomes boring
- Weak verbs allow writers to get away with too much imprecision; weak verbs allow you to say a lot without staking a position or making a strong claim. A poem can “be” or “is” a lot of things. More precise and effective sentences will tell your readers what a poem argues, asserts, insists, suggests, laments, etc.

Step 3: Distribute the handout of “active verbs” from the current UWS exercise book.

Step 4: Talk the students through revising some sentences that rely on weak verbs. You will need to look at these sentences beforehand (again, see the handout in current exercise book) and come up with some pointed questions to help the students along.

Step 5: Split students into pairs and tell them to exchange papers. Ask them to circle every instance of a weak verb on the first three pages of the paper. Then ask them to rewrite one or two sentences using active verbs.

Exercise #15 – Integrated Lecture and Punctuation Exercise (Sarah Caissie)

One of the challenges in my class is ensuring that students have the musical knowledge necessary to write in an informed, confident way, while discussing writing itself every day. With that in mind, I planned this lesson as a combination lecture and punctuation exercise. I handed out the worksheet below and presented a lecture on the transition from swing to bebop, stopping at the appropriate points to allow the students to correct the sentences on the worksheet. Before moving on, the class discussed why each punctuation mark was necessary. An added benefit is that almost all of the sentences on the worksheet are true, so they form a set of notes for the students.

Exercise #16: Semicolons

Consider the different shades of meaning of the two examples below:

1. When my mother was a young woman, she liked to have a lot of fun. I am the result.
2. When my mother was a young woman, she liked to have a lot of fun; I am the result.

Notice that in the first example the tone is judgmental and stiff; the speaker is bluntly hauling his or her mother before the bar and demanding that an account be rendered. The second example, by contrast, balances judgment and sympathy, pathos and amusement.

The point of all this is that punctuation provides not merely an occasion for the imposition of grammatical rules but a set of new possibilities for expression. The semicolon is not just there to look impressive, or to demonstrate to authority that you are aware of the rules which govern its use. It's there to make available a shade of meaning that is unavailable in other ways. For instance, you may wish to imply that two events are separate (and hence deserve separate clauses) but delicately connected in implicit ways (ways that are delicate enough that more explicit connections - such as with "and" or with an em-dash - would falsify the connection by reducing it to crudity).

Exercise: Take six pairs of sentences, in each case treating them separately, and then joining them with a semicolon. In each case write a brief account (such as the one above) of the difference made by linking the two clauses rather than separating them. For interest's sake, discriminate as well in each case the shade of meaning that would differ had you used some other connective - "and" or em-dash, or maybe something more subtle such as "And so," "Therefore," "Moreover" - in place of the semicolon.

Exercise #17: Identifying Common Grammatical Errors

Directions: Work with a partner to identify the grammatical error in each sentence, and record your findings.

1. To be honest I have never cared for the Red Sox.
2. Company policy prohibited smoking, which many employees resented.
3. The words “I do” may sound simple but they mean a lifetime commitment.
4. Our legal system is effective at trying and incinerating criminals.
5. Kristin’s first doll Malibu Barbie is still her favorite.
6. Eliot use feline imagery throughout the poem.
7. We met in State St. at Boston.
8. I was strongly attracted to her, she had special qualities.
9. Ron Guidry was once one of the Yankees most electrifying pitchers.
10. Mary laughs until she cried at that episode of “Seinfeld.”
11. When one first sees a painting by Georgia O’Keefe, you are impressed by its use of color.
12. The old aluminum boat sitting on its trailer.
13. By the time Ian arrived, Jill died.
14. A central part of my life’s goals have been to go to law school.
15. Sharks eat mostly squid, shrimp, crabs and other fish.
16. Each of the puppies thrived in their new home.
17. Shakespeare’s tragedy, Othello, deals with the dangers of jealousy.
18. I liked the movie very much, it made me laugh out loud.
19. They could see the eagles swooping and diving with binoculars.
20. The car is lying on it’s side in the ditch.

Grammatical Errors in the 20 Sentences: Answer Key

1. Missing comma after introductory element
2. Vague pronoun reference
3. Missing comma in a compound sentence
4. Wrong word
5. Missing comma(s) with a non-restrictive element
6. Wrong or missing verb ending
7. Wrong or missing preposition
8. Comma splice
9. Missing or misplaced possessive apostrophe
10. Unnecessary shift in tense
11. Unnecessary shift in pronoun
12. Sentence fragment
13. Wrong tense or verb form
14. Lack of subject/verb agreement
15. Missing comma in a series
16. Lack of agreement between pronoun and antecedent
17. Unnecessary comma(s) with a restrictive element
18. Fused sentence
19. Misplaced or dangling modifier
20. Its/it's confusion

Exercise #18: Comma Workshop

1. Use commas to separate independent clauses when they are joined by any of these seven coordinating conjunctions: *and, but, for, or, nor, so, yet*.

Example: I love vanilla ice cream, but my brother prefers chocolate.

2. Use commas after introductory a) clauses, b) phrases, or c) words that come before the main clause.

Example: In the beginning, there was light.

3. Use a pair of commas in the middle of a sentence to set off clauses, phrases, and words that are not essential to the meaning of the sentence. Use one comma before to indicate the beginning of the pause and one at the end to indicate the end of the pause.

Example: Hilda, a very good cook, went to San Francisco.

4. Do not use commas to set off essential elements of the sentence, such as clauses beginning with *that* (relative clauses). *That* clauses after nouns are always essential. *That* clauses following a verb expressing mental action are always essential.

Example: It is critical that you not put a comma in this sentence.

5. Use commas to separate three or more words, phrases, or clauses written in a series.

Example: George traveled to Spain, France, and Germany.

6. Use commas to separate two or more coordinate adjectives that describe the same noun. Be sure never to add an extra comma between the final adjective and the noun itself or to use commas with non-coordinate adjectives.

Example: The big, hairy monster glared down at me.

7. Use commas to set off all geographical names, items in dates (except the month and day), addresses (except the street number and name), and titles in names.

Example: On October 3, 2015, Jeff Smith, marketing director at Intel, traveled to 14 Appian Way in Rome, Italy.

Place commas wherever they are needed in the following sentences.

1. There was no question that John's painting a huge colorful and ugly mural was the worst entry in the art exhibit.
2. Werner von Braun Willy Ley and Edward Teller noted authorities in the field of rocket development have done much to guide the missile program of the United States.
3. Mr. Cready's ability to say the wrong thing at the wrong time is I believe amazing.
4. Running around the house the dog was abruptly stopped by a fence.
5. If the opposition should win our candidate would never have any political future.
6. Gracefully lightly and daintily the ballerina moved across the stage.
7. *Glamour* the woman's fashion magazine recently incorporated with *Charm* another fashion journal.
8. Joe was born on May 7 1955 and his best friend was born exactly two months later on July 7 1955.
9. Mr. and Mrs. Kwon my parents' best friends sat in front of us at the football game.
10. November 11 1918 the armistice ending World War I was signed.

Courtesy of the Purdue OWL

Answer Key

1. There was no question that John's painting, a huge, colorful, and ugly mural, was the worst entry in the art exhibit.
2. Werner von Braun, Willy Ley, and Edward Teller, noted authorities in the field of rocket development, have done much to guide the missile program of the United States.
3. Mr. Cready's ability to say the wrong thing at the wrong time is, I believe, amazing.
4. Running around the house, the dog was abruptly stopped by a fence.
5. If the opposition should win, our candidate would never have any political future.
6. Gracefully, lightly, and daintily, the ballerina moved across the stage.
7. *Glamour*, the woman's fashion magazine, recently incorporated with *Charm*, another fashion journal.
8. Joe was born on May 7, 1955, and his best friend was born exactly two months later on July 7, 1955.
9. Mr. and Mrs. Kwon, my parents' best friends, sat in front of us at the football game.
10. November 11, 1918, the armistice ending World War I was signed.

Style Scavenger Hunt for Rough Drafts

Find and write down one of each in your partner's rough draft:

1. A passive construction
2. A sentence with lots of forms of "to be" in it
3. A sentence with more than one "which" or "that" clauses
4. A vague verb such as "interacts," "affects," "relates," or "impacts."
5. One of the wasteful phrases listed above
6. An expletive opener ("It was"/"There was" etc.)

When you have done your best to find each of these elements, write a stronger sentence for your partner which fixes one of these sentence elements to beware.

Some sentence elements to beware of using too often

1. Expletive openers (“It is/was,” “There are/were”). They can lead to evasive and unclear sentences.

Examples: “There was a great deal of disagreement over the issue” versus “The different groups at the meeting disagreed about the issue.”

“It is through specific examples that we clarify our ideas” versus “We clarify our ideas through specific ideas.”

2. Too many “which,” “who,” or “that” clauses. They can lead to wordiness.

Example: “Paris, which is the largest city in all of France, was founded in the third century B.C.” versus “Paris, France’s largest city, was founded in the third century B.C.”

3. Too many appearances of the verb “to be” in its various forms. They can lead to wordiness.

Examples: “If it had not been for the unfair taxes the British imposed, there might not have been an American Revolution” versus “Without unfair British taxation, the Americans might not have revolted.”

“Stein is saying that American governing philosophy is in a situation where it is becoming an area that is under the domination of men who are not really sincere about what is good for the public” versus “Stein maintains that men who have dominated American governing philosophy care less for the public good than for their own advantage.”

4. The passive voice. This can lead to unclear, evasive, or wordy sentences. They can make your sentences sound distant and impersonal.

Examples: “Great vitality can be added to your style through your verbs—but only if they are wisely chosen” versus “You can add great vitality to your style through your verbs—but only if you choose them wisely.”

“Experimental chemistry had been dispensed to the subjects in large doses” versus “I stuck a syringe full of experimental novocain into the lab rats—twice the normal dose.”

5. Vague verbs such as “interacts,” “affects,” “relates,” “impacts.” These verbs do not actually tell the reader anything.

Example: “Mr. Smith’s failure to meet his debt obligations has impacted on his reputation” versus “Mr. Smith’s failure to meet his debt obligations has hurt his reputation.”

“This study related to the topic of heart disease” versus “This study investigates the causes of heart disease.”

6. Excessive use of jargon. This make you sound pretentious.

7. Wasteful phrases such as can usually be replaced by:

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|
| due to the fact that | because |
| in the event that | if |
| when it comes to | when |
| has to do with | concerns |
| a large number of | many |
| at the present time | now |
| for the reason that | because |
| during the time that | while |
| in light of the fact that | because |
| in order to | to |
| in this day and age | now, today |
| in light of the fact that | because, since |
| regardless of the fact that | although |
| in many cases | often |
| at this point in time | now |
| in the not-too-distant future | soon |
| for the purpose of | to |
| has the ability to | can |
| be aware of the fact that | know |
| is necessary that | must |
| are capable of/have the capability to | can |
| was understanding of | understood |

Making Passive Sentences Active

1. The computer was smashed by the student when it lost her close reading essay.
2. To the students' delight, hurricane Ike was responsible for destroying USDAN.
3. Facebook is used by students as a means of keeping in touch with friends.
4. The loud music playing in his neighbor's dorm room at 2 AM caused Bob to throw Britney Spears' CDs at the door for punishment.
5. Internet blogs are read by many students.
6. After the students were protesting against the incredibly bad cafeteria food, the administration brought in Quiznos.
7. Harry was temporarily paralyzed by Voldemort's curse.
8. A penalty kick was stopped by the Brandeis goalie so they won the state soccer championship.
9. Pirating essays off the internet would be a violation of Brandeis' plagiarism policies.
10. The students were annoyed by the tedious grammar exercises given to them by their instructor.

Short Writing Exercise

Instructions: Examine each of the following sentences and make revisions that improve them (also make any grammatical or punctuation corrections as necessary).

1. His diction shows that not only does he not understand why they are there; he views their presence as hopeless.

2. At the time of the story's publication, there were many Americans who felt a general hate towards immigrants and this view of different ethnic groups as building blocks to a society as well known and respected as New York, would be terrifying.

3. As the story, *The Horror at Red Hook* unveils, the reader is told more of Suydam's life in Red Hook, specifically the other foreigners that he associates with.

4. Lovecraft uses the architecture within the story, particularly the squalid and decayed "horror of houses and block and cities" to represent foreign immigration by accounting the horror of the buildings to "evil dragged from outside worlds" and because Malone has a phobia of the brick buildings, he fears and is ultimately racist towards foreign immigrants.

5. Lovecraft idealized notions of different races is that it is evil and feeds off of the good (white) American civilization.

Punctuation & Grammar Exercises

Apostrophes

A Romans road is older than an Americans. But would you rather eat Americans food or Romans food?

Foods of the worlds differ, but the worlds foods taste good. All foods goodness is relative.

I heard it from the horses mouth. We heard it from the horses mouth. The teeth in the horses mouths are rotten. A horse dentists hours are long and the pays terrible too.

Commas

Tolstoy gave up trying to write a history book and returning to his desk began to write a novel.

Walter Benjamin considered becoming a stand-up comedian but realizing that he had no sense of humor decided on philosophy.

Putting down his bottle of beer Aldous Huxley stubbed out his cigar and noticed he felt sick.

Numbers

The revolutions of the 18th century shocked the Atlantic world.

18th century revolutions shocked the Atlantic world.

There are 6 reasons not to attend class. There are 24 students.

A 1,000,000 customers cannot be wrong.

1m customers cannot be wrong.

Nine hundred and ninety-nine thousand customers cannot be wrong.

Speech and Quotation

What is truth said jesting Pilate and would not stay for an answer.

Anita Brookner put down her coffee cup looked at her picture of Napoleon and asked herself What shall I write today

Walter Benjamin believed that he like all individuals possessed weak messianic power, but this morning Walter had forgotten where his was.

Wiping mustard from his lips Francis Bacon his chin covered in ketchup wondered What is the scientific rationale of the double cheeseburger.

Sentence organization: 1

Our class should ideally begin at lunchtime.

He is today acting like a complete rotter.

She turns up late generally.

Contractions

It's not my fault.

The syllabus doesn't say we had to do this.

You didn't remind me.

I couldn't remember. It isn't fair!

Sentence length, quotes, commas

Aldous Huxley believed that the rise of industrial society and mass media would create a return to paganism but he could not remember why as his notes had slipped down the back of the sofa where are they he cried out jamming his hand under the cushion why can't I find them.

Count Leo Tolstoy didn't believe in class divisions he told his houseguests not to put their shoes outside their bedroom doors for cleaning we are all equal here he told his guests us and the servants but his wife took each of his guests aside after dinner and whispered that yes they should leave their shoes outside the door just as they did at other country houses they did as they were told in the morning all their shoes had been cleaned by the family servants at breakfast Tolstoy appeared not to notice their shoes in the hall nor that they all came to breakfast in polished footwear but then Tolstoy was very old by then and wasn't wearing socks that said he didn't care about convention.

The effects of the american revolution can be seen not just in british society but also across european society the revolutions radicalism exported from britain and re-exported by the americans example influenced a generation there were other unforeseen consequences too having entered the war of independence to thwart its british rival the french government supplied the majority of the gunpowder used by the American rebels but the cost of fighting another atlantic war overburdened the already creaking french economy the triggers for the american revolution of seventeen seventy-six and the french revolution of seventeen eighty-nine both occurred interestingly in fiscal problems the british taxed the anglo americans took much the french taxed their peasants too much and their aristocrats too little by funding the revolutionary crisis in british america the french ironically hastened their own at the time no one notice this curiously but recent scholarships focus on fiscal policy and its impact on representative systems has changed the consensus.

Why Do Word Choices Matter?

Examine the following sets of words that are used often to describe the same subject, and determine how and why the word choice makes a difference in each instance (“So What?”). What different effect does each have on the reader? What do the different phrases suggest, emphasize, or what associations do they create? What does each reveal about the author or speaker’s subject position?

| Ex. 1 | Vs. | Ex. 2 | So what? |
|---------------------------|-----|------------------------------|----------|
| Government misinformation | | Government deceit | |
| Retarded | | Mentally challenged | |
| Columbus highway shooter | | Columbus highway sniper | |
| Insane Asylum | | Mental hospital | |
| Erotic dancer | | Stripper | |
| Domestic worker | | Servant | |
| War on Iraq | | Middle Eastern Conflict | |
| Cancer survivor | | Cancer victim | |
| Prison | | Correctional facility | |
| Wheelchair-bound | | Wheelchair user | |
| Steroid | | Performance enhancement drug | |
| Alleged assailant | | Criminal suspect | |

7 Principles of Highly Effective Writing

Principle 1: Avoid Wordiness

I am of the opinion that the aforementioned managers should be advised that they will be evaluated with regard to the utilization of responsive organizational software for the purpose of devising a responsive network of customers.

Principle 2: Don't be Redundant

A staff that large in size needs an effective supervisor who can get the job done. All of these problems have combined together to create a serious crisis.

Principle 3: Avoid Needless Qualification

Ferrera seems to be sort of a slow worker.

This rather serious breach of etiquette may possibly shake the very foundations of the corporate world.

Principle 4: Cut or Combine Unnecessary Sentences

Napoleon suffered defeat in Russia because most of his troops perished in the cold. Most of his men died because they had no winter clothing to protect them from the cold.

Principle 5: Avoid Needless Self-Reliance

I am of the opinion that air pollution is a more serious problem than most people realize.

Principle 6: Use the Active Voice

The Spanish-American War was fought by brave but misguided men.

Test results were distributed with no concern for confidentiality.

Principle 7: Avoid Weak Openings

It would be unwise for businesses to ignore the illiteracy problem.

There are many strong points in the candidate's favor: intelligence, unfortunately, is not along them.

Working Out Problem “To Be” Sentences

1. Obviously these are all beautiful things from the earth, natural and real. Human beings are also very natural figures.

These all have the real and natural beauty of things made from the earth, which humans also possess.

2. It is comprehensible, then, that this last line is said with a sense of resignation and fatigue.

The speaker states this line with a comprehensible sense of resignation and fatigue.

3. We can say that the mistress *was* a woman, that Shakespeare created the basis on which to view her as an ideal woman, and that she was nowhere near ideal.

We can say that the mistress was a woman, that Shakespeare created the basis on which to view her as an ideal woman, even though she differed strongly from this ideal state. *[The first “was” is permissible here because it is a stylistic choice emphasizing pastness; the next sentence would explain what the mistress presently is, now that she’s no longer a woman.]*

4. Moreover, even the comparison to summer is not considered proper enough: the beloved is more lovely and temperate than summer.

Moreover, the speaker does not even consider the comparison to summer sufficient: the beloved, “more lovely and more temperate” than summer, ...

5. He informs that her “breasts are dun” (3) instead of white, and lastly her hairs are like black wires, when it should be soft and tender.

He informs her that her “breasts are dun” (3) instead of white; black wires best describe her hairs, which lose their softness and tenderness.

6. The speaker characterizes his beloved as gorgeous, commenting again on this person’s beauty, noting that summer’s “gold complexion dimmed,” whereas he or she is constantly “bright” (6). These notes on beauty may bring up ideas femininity, which is a gender and not a sex.

... whereas he or she seems constantly “bright” (6). These notes on beauty may bring up ideas of femininity, which belong to gender and not sex.

7. The confusion built up by this sonnet can be explained when the sonnet is thoroughly evaluated and interpreted.

After thoroughly evaluating the sonnet, the confusion it seemed to have built up no longer exists.

8. This line is basically saying that beauty can often mask what is beneath the surface.

This line implies that beauty can often mask what lies beneath the surface.

9. The persona could have easily written a poem of how unattractive she is but the audience would not have understood the extent of what seems to be disgust for her.

The persona could have easily written a poem about her unattractiveness, but then the audience would not have understood the extent of his disgust for her.

10. This has a double meaning as Shakespeare is saying that the man in the union is the more powerful of the two and is almost all-seeing, like a higher being such as God.

With this phrase, Shakespeare implies that the man, all-seeing and almost God-like, presides over his female counterpart and their union.

11. The individual that Shakespeare describes in this poem is beautiful because unlike nature her beauty doesn't change.

Unlike the beauty of nature, the beauty of the individual that Shakespeare describes in this poem does not change.

12. When read in context those words describe how the "mistress" is in fact, opposite those words.

When read in context, the words Shakespeare uses to describe the "mistress" reveal how the character actually contradicts such a description.

13. The thought of trust in a relationship is significant, but the act of believing is essential to a relationship's livelihood.

Trust makes a relationship significant, but believing in that relationship becomes essential to its livelihood.

14. As in the first half of the phrase, the reader would automatically assume that the subject is a woman--after all, the term "mistress" directly implies femininity.

As in the first half of the phrase, the reader would automatically assume the subject female—after all, the term "mistress" directly implies femininity.

15. Nature's heart, no doubt, is "acquainted/ With shifting change" (3).

Nature's heart, no doubt, is "acquainted / With shifting change" (3). [*"is" is acceptable here because the syntax of the quotation from the poem requires it. Alternatively, the sentence could have been written, "Nature's heart, no doubt "acquainted / With shifting change," ...]*

16. Rather, they are held together in such a way that allows them to be both warmly close to each other.

Rather, the poem holds them together in such a way that they enjoy a warm closeness with each other.

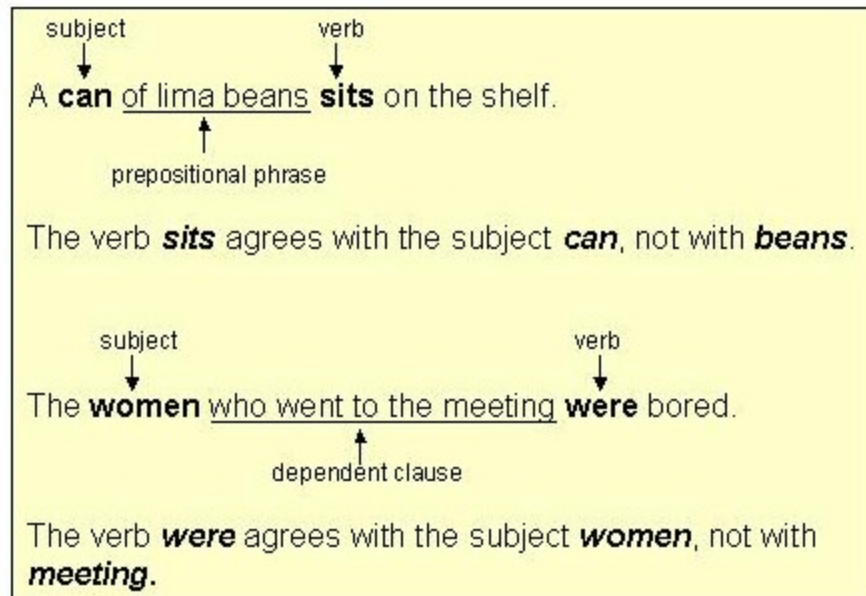
Some general guidelines on how to fix “to be”:

- 1) *Check for passive voice—if you can insert a “by clause” into the sentence, or if one is already there, you’re looking at passive voice. You know that the sentence “This line is said with a sense of resignation” is in the passive voice because it could be written, “This line is said **by the speaker** with a sense of resignation.” To fix passive voice, take the “by clause” and make it the subject of the sentence. “**The speaker** says this line with a sense of resignation.”*
- 2) *Boil the sentence down to its most basic statement, then find a stronger verb to express the verbal idea, and rewrite the sentence using the new verb. “The man in the union is the more powerful of the two” boils down to “The man is powerful”; stronger verbs that expresses the idea “to be powerful” might include dominate, preside, lord, etc. We might rewrite, “The man in the union lords his power over his partner,” or as above, “The man presides over his partner and their union.”*
- 3) *Sometimes “to be” is needed to fit the syntax of a quotation, and in rare cases it can be used for stylistic emphasis. See numbers 3 and 15 above.*

Subject-Verb Agreement

1. A phrase or clause between subject and verb does not change the number of the subject.

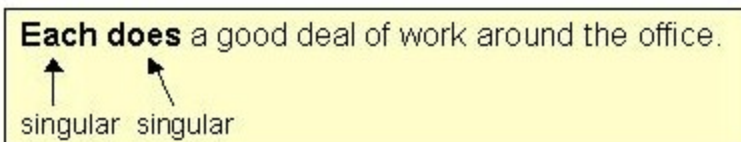
Examples:



2. Indefinite pronouns as subjects

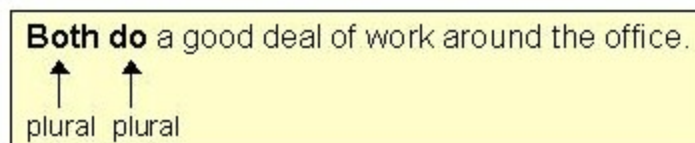
- **Singular indefinite pronoun subjects** take singular verbs.

SINGULAR: *each, either, neither, one, no one, nobody, nothing, anyone, anybody, anything, someone, somebody, something, everyone, everybody, everything*



- **Plural indefinite pronoun subjects** take plural verbs.

PLURAL: *several, few, both, many*



- Some **indefinite pronouns** may be either **singular or plural**: with

EITHER SINGULAR OR PLURAL: *some, any, none, all, most*

Sugar is *uncountable*; therefore, the sentence has a singular verb.

Marbles are *countable*; therefore, the sentence has a plural verb.

4. With **compound subjects joined by *or/nor***, the verb agrees with the subject nearer to it.

In the above example, the plural verb **are** agrees with the nearer subject **actors**.

In this example, the singular verb **is** agrees with the nearer subject **director**.

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Waiter, there **is** a **fly** in my soup. (There **are** four **flies** in my soup.)

singular singular plural plural

How **are** the **relatives** taking the bad news?

plural plural

6. **Collective Nouns** (*group, jury, crowd, team, etc.*) may be singular or plural, depending on meaning.

The **jury** **has** awarded custody to the grandmother.

singular singular

In this example, the jury is acting as one unit; therefore, the verb is singular.

The **jury** members **have** been arguing for five days.

plural plural

In this example, the jury members are acting as twelve individuals; therefore, the verb is plural.

7. **Titles of single entities** (*books, organizations, countries, etc.*) are always singular.

The Grapes of Wrath **takes** a long time to read.

singular singular

8. Plural form subjects

- **Plural form subjects with a singular meaning** take a singular verb. (e.g. *news, measles, mumps, physics, etc.*)

Mumps **is** a contagious disease.

singular singular

- **Plural form subjects with singular or plural meaning** take a singular or plural verb, depending on meaning. (e.g. *politics, economics, etc.*)

Politics **is** an interesting subject.
↑ ↑
singular singular

In this example, politics is a single topic; therefore, the sentence has a singular verb.

The **politics** of the situation **were** complicated.

↑ ↑
plural plural

In this example, politics refers to the many aspects of the situation; therefore, the sentence has a plural verb.

- **Plural form subjects with a plural meaning** take a plural verb. (e.g. *scissors, trousers*)

The **scissors** **are** on the table.

↑ plural ↑ plural

The **pair** of scissors **is** on the table.

singular singular

Note: In this example, the subject of the sentence is *pair*, therefore, the verb must agree with it. (Because *scissors* is the object of the preposition, *scissors* does not affect the number of the verb.)

9. **With subject and subjective complement or different number**, the verb always agrees with the subject.

My favorite **topic** **is** POEMS by Longfellow.

singular singular

Poems by Longfellow **are** my favorite TOPIC.
↑ plural ↑ plural

Lesson Plan: Exercises for Voice and Audience (Lauren Holm)

Objective: To help students achieve a more natural academic prose style and have a discussion about why academic essays are written in the voice they are.

Time: I've done these exercises together (approximately 1 class session), but sometimes doing them back to back is too much. Having students bring in examples of very good or very bad writing, or even looking back at assigned readings you've read together over the course of the semester, works well in conjunction with either of these exercises.

Assignment that's underway: Any. When I'm doing workshops on stance and style, I like to include exercises on voice and audience. Because these exercises are fun, they can be especially good during midterms or near a break.

Voice

Ask students to list the characteristics of academic prose. Invariably they find it dry and boring. They haven't thought about why they're asked to write in this style or how academic papers might be written in a less artificial voice. So we talk about it.

Ask students to choose a sentence or two from the draft they're working on now and rewrite it in different voices. Here are some possible voices, though you can feel free to think up your own:

- A politician
- A five-year-old child
- Someone who's trying to sound smart
- A used car salesman

(I borrowed these from a course called "Writing As Technology" at Cornell. I ask the students to come up with their own and occasionally try new ones. Maybe an author you've read in class? Paris Hilton makes them hysterical, but is not actually a good exercise!)

Ask students to read their original sentences and their new sentences without telling the class which voice they've chosen. Students try to guess what voice the sentence has been rewritten in and talk about what changed. Major things that change are diction, tone and length.

Next, ask them to rewrite sentences in their own speaking voice. Sometimes they need to work with a partner to actually speak through the sentence. Have them read the sentences again and talk about what changed. Inevitably the majority of them discover they have been writing in a voice that is much different from their speaking voice and we talk about how they might incorporate more of their unique personality into their writing.

Audience

For me, voice and audience go together. I try to get my students to think about audience with each paper by including a target audience as part of the assignment. Students tend to fall back into writing their papers directly to me, which I want to avoid. One way to get them to think about

audience is to have them repeat the exercise described above, this time changing who the sentences are addressed to, rather than who is speaking. For this one I give them slightly different options:

- A member of your family
- A used car salesman
- Someone you want to impress
- Someone you hate

We discuss how changing your audience effects your writing style. The differences in this exercise are more subtle, so it requires students to pay attention to the details of their writing. In addition to changing the tone of your writing, imagining a different audience can help you overcome writer's block. Addressing an overly-critical audience can be paralyzing for writers. I encourage students to imagine an audience that will allow them to be productive and prolific.

In addition to thinking collectively about why we write academic essays the way we do, this exercise acts as a segue to talking about reader-based prose versus writer-based prose.

Lesson Plan: Crafting Style for Great Writing

Goals: To teach students how they can continue to improve their writing, particularly after the UWS is over

Assignment sequence: Anywhere, but it would probably be most effective to place this somewhere in the research unit

Time required: 10 minutes (approx)

During one of my semesters teaching the UWS, I had a student make a very valid critique. He said: “You spend a lot of time showing us the difference between good and bad writing, but I want to know the difference between good and *great* writing.” This comment stumped me for a long time, since the difference between “good” and “great” is obviously subjective.

However – in my opinion, at least – the difference between “good” and “great” often comes down to style and the amount of care the author takes in crafting his/her sentences. Therefore, this exercise helps students to see how carefully and slowly they need to proceed with their papers, if they want to produce a great piece of writing.

Step 1: Distribute index cards to each of your students. If you don’t have any, tell them to fold a piece of paper in half.

Step 2: Using the projector, display a provocative and iconic image. I’ve used Edvard Munch’s *The Scream*, but anything will do.

Step 3: Ask students to write a few sentences, describing the image to someone who has never seen the painting. They cannot write more than what they can fit on one side of the index card, and they cannot use any form of the verb “to be.” Do not give the students more than five minutes.

In my experience, students – even the weak ones – will write thoughtful and insightful sentences in response to this prompt. They can do this because their task is simple and their time and space is constrained; therefore, every word has to count. Furthermore, by removing any form of the verb “to be,” students cannot make flat statements of fact (“this is a painting about alienation”). Instead, they have to describe that alienation in *active* terms, which means analytic terms (“a figure stands isolated in the foreground, while two figures in the background retreat, never glancing at his distress”).

