It is doubtful whether a man [or woman?] ever brings his faculties to bear with their full force on a subject until he writes upon it.
—CICERO

It would hardly seem debatable that to write well we need to think clearly. And the evidence is strong for concluding that writing about ideas can help to clarify them. Taking this notion a step further, many would argue that the act of writing can create ideas, can lead writers to discover what they think. Language, according to many scholars, can give birth to thought, and written language provides a way to refine our thoughts since, unlike speech, it can be manipulated until it accurately reflects our thinking.

THINKING MADE VISIBLE

Consider writing, then, as thinking made visible. Writer Isaac Asimov expresses his satisfaction with the link between thinking and writing:

Thinking is the activity I love best, and writing to me is simply thinking through my fingers.

QUICK TAKES

In this chapter you will learn:
- the meaning of critical thinking
- the role our world view plays in thinking and writing
- the need to consider audience and purpose
- the role metaphor plays in thinking and writing
- the role reasoning by analogy plays in persuasive writing
Novelist E. M. Forster expresses a similar sentiment:

**How can I tell what I think till I see what I've said?**

Many writers have groaned over the pain of writing. In his poem *The Four Tetets*, T. S. Eliot writes of the “intolerable wrestle / With words and meaning.” York writer Fran Lebowitz is more graphic in her complaint: “Writing is torture very hard work. It's not coal mining, but it's work.”

After visiting the Galapagos Islands in the 1830s, evolutionist Charles D wrote to his sister from his ship, the *Beagle*, about the special challenge of reason paper, the kind of writing we emphasize in this book.

I am just now beginning to discover the difficulty of expressing one's ideas on paper. As long as it consists solely of description it is pretty easy; but where reasoning comes into play, to make a proper connection, a clearness and a mod fluency, is to me a difficulty of which I had no idea.

Although writing and thinking may be difficult, mastery and success in both be well worth the effort. Indeed, clear writing is often essential. If we are not a articulate a request, a complaint, or an endorsement in precise, forceful language may find ourselves settling for less than we deserve. If we can't write a persuasi plication, the job or graduate school position may go to someone else.

In a recent *New York Times* piece, long-time professors were asked to give to incoming college freshman. Professor Stanley Fish advises students to take a position course even if it's not required of them:

I have taught many students whose SAT scores exempted them from the writing requirement, but a disheartening number of them couldn't write and an equal nu had never been asked to. They managed to get through high school without le how to write a clean English sentence, and if you can't do that you can't do any Professor Garry Willis also stresses the importance of writing:

Learn to write well. Most incoming college students do not do it and it hampe them in courses and in later life. Read what you write to a friend, and ask the to read it back to you. Lack of clarity, coherence or shape will leap out at you.

Film director Quentin Tarantino agrees with Professor Willis on the va reading your writing aloud to a friend. When accepting an award for his *E Unchained* screenplay, he thanked his friends for listening to his writing so he 'heard it through their ears.'

**CRITICAL THINKING**

If, as we maintain, there is a strong relationship between thinking clearly and ing well—if one skill strengthens the other—then integrating the two as a co study makes sense. But what do we mean by “thinking clearly”? For our pur
we have found it helpful to narrow our focus and concentrate on the phrase critical thinking. This term has assumed a central position in both academic and public life and is variously defined today.

In most contexts today, the term critical means censorious or faultfinding, but it comes to us from the Greek kriticos and Latin criticus, meaning able to discern or separate. It is this sense of critical that we have in mind—discerning or discriminating thought characterized by careful analysis and judgment. As student Denise Selleck describes it, “Thinking critically is the ability to understand a concept fully, taking in different sides of an issue or idea while not being swayed by the propaganda or other fraudulent methods used to promote it.” She recognizes the importance of an open mind and the element of self-defense implicit in critical thinking. We must learn to defend ourselves against the false claims, questionable judgments, and confusing or deceptive arguments presented to us in commercials, ads, and political campaigns.

An Open Mind—Examining Your World View

To have an open mind is to listen attentively to the views of others. It is, however, equally important to be aware of where our views come from. Cultures, subgroups within those cultures, and families within these groups tend to share what is called a world view, a set of assumptions about the world and the behavior of people in it. We may harbor prejudices about groups that cloud our thinking and restrict fair judgment. Many of these attitudes grow from the contexts of our lives that we take for granted—the opinions of parents and friends, our ethnic and religious backgrounds. In Texas, in 2012, the Republican political platform condemned teaching “critical thinking skills” because they “have the purpose of challenging the student’s fixed beliefs and undermining parental authority.” We respectfully disagree and encourage you to examine your “fixed beliefs.”

Where does the weakness in Jennifer’s defense lie?

DOONESBURY © 1988 G. B. TRUDEAU. REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION OF UNIVERSAL UCLICK. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.
When Dominique Strauss-Kahn, head of the International Monetary Fund, a
well-known French politician, was arrested for the rape of a maid in a New York
luxury hotel, the hosts of The View, a popular talk show, weighed in on the sex
Barbara Walters, a pioneer in television journalism and a prominent figure in
York society, suggested that the man must suffer from a sexual addiction, some
beyond his control; otherwise, why would such an intelligent and prominent
commit such a crime? Elizabeth Hasselbeck, wife of a professional football playe
former contestant on the television show Survivor, believed the man did it beca
he could, that he was a powerful man who thought that he had the right to do wh
wanted. Whoopi Goldberg, an African American actress and a standup comedi
believed he did it because he did not consider the maid, an immigrant from A
person. He thought of her as an object to serve his needs. Can you see the 
views of these three women reflected in their interpretation of the alleged crime

In the words of Professor Louis Menand, “Ideas are produced not by individu
but by groups of individuals—ideas are social... ideas do not develop accordi
some inner logic of their own, but are entirely dependent, like germs, on their i
 carriers and the environment.” Knowledge and ideas are not absolutes but are
ject to the time, place, and circumstances in which they are expressed. For inst
up until the twentieth century, women were considered incapable of making po
d decisions on political issues and thus were denied the vote. Today, most cul
recognize that such a view was socially constructed, not inherently true. Ha
professor Henry Louis Gates Jr. sees history as “a chronicle of formerly accep
t outrages”:

Once upon a time, perfectly decent folk took it for granted that watching t
gladiators hack each other to death was just the thing to do on a summer aft
noon, that making slaves of Africans was a good deal for all concerned. Wha
were they thinking? You could say that posterity is a hanging judge, except t
sooner or later capital punishment, too, will turn up on that chronicle of ou

We have an inborn tendency to filter out information that doesn’t match o
ases. We are inclined to remember news that matches our world view and di
facts that contradict it. In his book True Enough: Learning to Live in a Post So
Society, Farhad Manjoo, a staff writer at Salon.com, emphasizes this point. W
sist information “that doesn’t mesh with our preconceived beliefs.” Manjoo cite
studies to illustrate this point. Students at Dartmouth and Princeton were sh
film clip of a football game between their two teams and asked to note instan
cheating. “Each group, watching the same clip, was convinced that the oth
had cheated more.” A similar manipulation of facts occurred when Stanford stu
one group favoring the death penalty and the other opposing it, “were show
same two studies: one suggested that executions have a deterrent effect that re
subsequent murders, and the other [study] doubted that [conclusion].” Each
of students “found the study that supported their position to be well-conducte
persuasive and the other one to be profoundly flawed.”
**Hedgehogs and Foxes**

In a now famous essay, *The Hedgehog and the Fox*, British philosopher Isaiah Berlin (1909–1997) divided thinkers and writers into two categories—hedgehogs and foxes. The title comes from a fragment of a poem by ancient Greek poet Archilochus: “the fox knows many little things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing.” According to Berlin, hedgehogs view the world through a single lens, a dominant idea, while foxes base their view of the world on a wide variety of experiences. Hedgehogs have a focused world view and strong convictions. Foxes are less rigid and more pragmatic, more aware of complexity and nuance.

Other writers use Berlin’s classification scheme for their own purposes. In his book, *Founding Brothers*, historian Joseph Ellis defines George Washington as an “archetypal hedgehog. And the one big thing he knew was that America’s future as a nation lay to the West, in its development over the next century of a continental empire.” Ellis credits Washington’s focus on developing canals to this one big idea.

How would you classify yourself? Are you a hedgehog or a fox?

Questioning our personal world view can be one of the most challenging steps in our growth as critical thinkers. In the following essay, newspaper columnist Jon Carroll points out that our world view, our opinions, can sometimes blind us to the truth.

**The Problem with New Data**

JON CARROLL

You may have heard that Dr. James Hansen, the man who first popularized the notion that carbon dioxide levels and global warming were inextricably linked, has issued a new report saying that further studies have revealed that in fact other heat-trapping chemicals—methane, chlorofluorocarbons, particulate matter like coal soot, plus other smog-creating chemicals—are probably more responsible for the trend than carbon dioxide.

Any advance in scientific understanding is good news. Hansen’s report is particularly interesting because it is contrary to his previous position, indicating that he is able to separate his professional ego from his scientific conclusions and change his mind right out in public.

This is less usual than it should be. We are all afraid of being wrong, and we will tend to cling to our opinions in the face of mounting evidence to the contrary. In ideal science, all opinions are merely way stations on the road to the truth; in real-world science, though, opinions are the basis of reputation and income, and the difference between the establishment view and the revealed truth is not easy to discern from the outside.

And there’s another reason why Hansen’s conclusions are good news—it’s a lot easier to control the production of these new culprits than it is the production of carbon dioxide, which is the unavoidable byproduct of the burning of all fossil fuels, as well as the gas that emerges from our mouths every time we exhale.

And yet, Hansen’s report was greeted with considerable trepidation. The results might be misinterpreted; big polluters might twist the data; Congress might have a fig leaf to cover its natural inclination to let big corporations do whatever they want.
This is what happens when politics and science start to commingle. In politics, opinions—‘they are called “positions” or “principles”’—are the official yardstick of integrity. People who change their minds are considered to be weak, are said to waffle.

Someone who has staked out a tough position on carbon dioxide would be seriously uninterested in data suggesting it’s not really the problem. Someone who supported the Kyoto Protocol—which identified carbon dioxide as the principal culprit—would feel the urge to attack Hansen, who would be identified as a “former ally.”

Following the facts wherever they lead is always dangerous in the political arena.

In fact, Hansen has not changed his position on global warming at all. He is still of the opinion that it forms a significant threat to the short-term (less than 100 years) ecological health of the planet. But he has a nuanced and evolving view of the causes.

“Nuanced” and “evolving” will, in the political world, buy you a cup of coffee, provided you also have $2.

The urge to hang on tight knows no ideology. The gun lobby reflexively brings up the slippery slope [see “Fallacious Arguments,” Chapter 6] and the Second Amendment no matter what the issue, making something like trigger locks as controversial as universal confiscation of firearms.

Multiculturalists reflexively support bilingual education, despite new studies suggesting that kids from different cultures learn better when a single language is the classroom standard.

Look into the heart of your opinions: What if early detection of breast cancer had no real effect on mortality rates? What if secondhand smoke turned out to be no health risk at all? What if free condoms for every child lowered disease rates by 50 percent? What if air bags were bad, or good, or whatever is the opposite of what you currently believe they are?

It’s the brain lock issue. We want to believe something because it fits with the other things we believe, because the people we know believe it, because the people who believe the other things are loathsome.

Alas, the universe of facts is not a democracy. If it were, I’d vote for fried pork rinds as a health food.

**EXERCISE 1A**

*Examining Your World View*

1. Professor Henry Louis Gates Jr. lists gladiators and slavery as two of the “acceptable outrages” that history chronicles. We added denying women the vote. As a class, add to this list.

2. Look closely at these “outrages”—gladiators, slavery, women being denied the vote, and others generated by your responses to question 1 above. In each case, ask which group held this view and what they had to gain from supporting this belief.
3. Gates predicts that one day capital punishment will be viewed as a “formerlly acceptable outrage.” Here’s a chance to “deconstruct” a socially constructed belief, to examine the roots of your own beliefs. As Jon Carroll says, “Look into the heart of your opinions.” Write a paragraph stating your position on capital punishment and include the views held by your family, friends, and religion (if you belong to a religious group). Then compare paragraphs with a small group of your classmates. What have you learned about your world view? Are you a hedgehog or a fox? Putting such views into writing or even formulating what you think can be a challenge. There is no right or wrong answer here—just a critical exploration of your thoughts discussed with your peers.

WRITING AS A PROCESS

What is written without effort is in general read without pleasure.

—SAMUEL JOHNSON

Earlier in this chapter we say that writing is thinking made visible, but the process of making our thinking visible is complex, not a matter of simple dictation from our mind to the page. Where do you begin when faced with a writing assignment? Many students turn to the five-paragraph essay format—introduction, three supporting paragraphs, and conclusion—and choose material that will fit easily into this preconceived mold. Writers rely on this formula because they fear that without it they will produce an incoherent essay. They assume that if they follow it, their writing will at least be organized. Even inexperienced writers must learn to let go of this “safety net” because, although it may save them from anxiety and a disorganized essay, it can also determine the content of the essay; if an idea does not fit easily into the mold, the writer must discard it. This rigid structure prevents writers from exploring their topic, from following thoughts that may lead to interesting insights, and from allowing the material, the content, to find the shape that best suits it.

The most common misconception that student writers have is that good writers sit at their desks and produce in one sitting a polished, mechanically correct, cohesive piece of writing. If students are unable to do this, they conclude that they cannot write and approach all writing tasks with dread. As a first step toward improving their writing, students must discard this myth and replace it with a realistic picture of how writers write. Ernest Hemingway, in Paris, writing his first collection of short stories, In Our Time, spent whole mornings on single paragraphs. While no one expects students, whose goal it is to produce a competent essay, to spend this kind of time on their writing, students, like most writers, must realize that writing is a complicated intellectual act, that it involves many separate tasks, and that the mind is simply not able to handle all of these tasks at once. As writer Henry Miller saw it, “Writing, like life itself, is a voyage of discovery.”
What are the distinct tasks involved in the act of writing a paper, of making your thinking visible?

- Generating ideas
- Conducting research (if necessary)
- Focusing a topic
- Establishing a thesis
- Organizing the essay
- Organizing paragraphs
- Providing transitions between sentences and paragraphs
- Choosing appropriate diction (word choice)
- Polishing sentences for fluency
- Correcting grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation

Each of these tasks could, of course, be broken down further. What is the solution to this problem, this mental overload that writing forces on us? The answer is that it must be done in stages.

Writing is a process that breaks down into roughly three stages—creating, shaping, and correcting. A common error students make is to focus their energy on what should be the last stage (correcting) at the beginning, when the focus should be on the creative stage of the writing process. The effect of this misplaced attention is to inhibit creative thinking. It is essential that the writer give ample time to the first stage, to generating ideas, to following impulsive thoughts even if they may initially appear unrelated or irrelevant. At this stage, a writer must allow himself to experience confusion to be comfortable with chaos; he must learn to trust the writing process to realize that out of this chaos a logical train of thought will gradually emerge. Most important of all, writers must learn to suspend all criticism as they explore their topic and their thinking.

Invention Strategies—Generating Ideas

Two concrete methods for beginning this exploration of your topic are brainstorming and freewriting, one or both of which you may already be familiar with.

To brainstorm, simply put the topic of the writing assignment at the top of a blank piece of paper or your screen. Then jot down words or phrases that come to mind as you think about this topic—as many words as possible, even if you are not sure they relate directly. After brainstorming, look at your list: circle ideas that you want to develop, draw lines through those that are decidedly unrelated or uninteresting, and draw arrows or make lists of ideas that are connected to one another. At this point, you should be able to go to the next stage, organizing your essay either by writing an outline or simply by listing main points that you want to develop into paragraphs.
In freewriting, you begin by writing your topic on a blank sheet, but instead of jotting down words and phrases, you write continuously, using sentences. These sentences do not have to be mechanically correct, nor do they have to be connected. The only rule of freewriting is that you may not stop writing; you may not put down your pen or leave the keyboard for a set length of time. After freewriting for five to ten minutes, read over your freewriting, circling ideas that you find interesting or insightful. Now you may do another freewriting on the idea or ideas you have circled, or you may try to formulate a thesis or list ideas you want to develop. (For a detailed discussion of your thesis, see Chapter 4.)

These methods have two things in common. They are relatively painless ways to begin the writing process, and they allow you to circumvent your own worst enemy, self-criticism—the voice that says, “That’s not right,” “That’s not what I mean,” “This doesn’t make sense.” Critical evaluation of your writing is necessary but self-defeating if you are critical at the beginning. In addition, freewriting may offer surprising access to ideas you never knew you had.

If your paper requires research, you will want to start reading relevant journals and books and exploring websites. You may have started this process when searching for a topic. As you read, you will need to take notes either on note cards, in a reading journal, or on a computer where you can store them until you are ready to print them out. No matter the source, be sure to record the data necessary for documentation. We suggest you try to brainstorm and freewrite on writing assignments throughout this text.

The First Draft

After exploring a topic in this way and examining data if you have done research, you will have a sense of what you want to say and will be ready for a first draft.

Successful writer Anne Lamott, in her book *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*, discusses the role of first drafts. Her advice grew out of her own experience as a writer and from writing classes she has taught. The title refers to a family story in which her brother, when 10 years old, was overwhelmed by a school report on birds that had been assigned three months earlier and was now due. Their father, a professional writer, put his arm around his almost weeping son and counseled, “Bird by bird, buddy. Just take it bird by bird.” Good advice for writing and for life. See if you can start treating your first drafts as what Lamott calls “the child’s draft” in the following excerpt from her book.

The Child’s Draft

Now, practically even better news than that of short assignments is the idea of shitty first drafts. All good writers write them. This is how they end up with good second drafts and terrific third drafts. People tend to look at successful writers, writers who are getting their books published and maybe even doing well financially, and think that they sit down at their desks every morning feeling like a
million dollars, feeling great about who they are and how much talent they have and what a great story they have to tell; that they take in a few deep breaths, push back their sleeves, roll their necks a few times to get all the cricks out, and dive in, typing fully formed passages as fast as a court reporter. But this is just the fantasy of the uninitiated. I know some very great writers, writers you love who write beautifully and have made a great deal of money, and not one of them sits down routinely feeling wildly enthusiastic and confident. Not one of them writes elegant first drafts. All right, one of them does, but we do not like her very much. We do not think that she has a rich inner life.

Very few writers really know what they are doing until they've done it. Nor do they go about their business feeling dewy and thrilled. They do not type a few stiff warm-up sentences and then find themselves bounding along like huskies across the snow. One writer I know tells me that he sits down every morning and says to himself nicely, "It's not like you don't have a choice, because you do—you can either type or kill yourself." We all often feel like we are pulling teeth, even those writers whose prose ends up being the most natural and fluid. The right words and sentences just do not come pouring out like ticker tape most of the time.

For me and most of the other writers I know, writing is not rapturous. In fact, the only way I can get anything written at all is to write really, really shitty first drafts. The first draft is the child's draft, where you let it all pour out and then let it romp all over the place, knowing that no one is going to see it and that you can shape it later. You just let this childlike part of you channel whatever voices and visions come through and onto the page. If one of the characters wants to say, "Well, so what, Mr. Poopy Pants?" you let her. If the kid wants to get into really sentimental, weepy, emotional territory, you let him. Just get it all down on paper, because there may be something great in those six crazy pages that you would never have gotten to by more rational, grown-up means. There may be something in the very last line of the very last paragraph on page six that you just love, that is so beautiful or wild that you now know what you're supposed to be writing about, more or less, or in what direction you might go—but there was no way to get to this without first getting through the first five and a half pages.

The Time to Be Critical

In agreement with Anne Lamott, teacher and writer Donald Murray, in an essay or revision titled "The Maker's Eye," points out a key difference between student writers and professional writers:

When students complete a first draft, they consider the job of writing done—and their teachers too often agree. When professional writers complete a first draft, they usually feel that they are at the start of the writing process. When a draft is completed, the job of writing can begin.

The time to be critical arrives when you have a complete draft. Now is the time to read with a critical mind, trusting your instinct that if a word, a sentence, or a passage seems unclear or awkward to you, your reader will most likely stumble over the
same word, sentence, or passage. You are ready to reshape your first draft, adding and deleting ideas, refining your thesis, polishing sentences for fluency, and finally writing another draft. Sometimes, the writing of the first draft will tell you when you need to do a little more research, expand your explanation of a point, or check some of your facts to be sure of your evidence.

Finally, you will be ready to proofread for small errors and to read your essay aloud to yourself or to a friend. Always be ready to write another draft if it becomes necessary.

Every stage in the writing process is important. To slight one is to limit the success of the final product. There are exceptions, of course. Some writers are able to compress some of these steps, to generate and organize ideas in their minds before ever putting pen to paper. But for most of us, successful writing results from an extended writing process that is continually recursive.

As Donald Murray notes in his essay on revision, “Most readers underestimate the amount of rewriting it usually takes to produce spontaneous reading.” But we can take heart from novelist Kurt Vonnegut: “This is what I find most encouraging about the writing trades: They allow mediocre people who are patient and industrious to revise their stupidity, to edit themselves into something like intelligence.”

A caution: The danger in the way we have described the writing process is that we make it seem as though it progresses in three neat steps, that it proceeds in a linear fashion from prewriting to writing to rewriting and correction. In fact, this process is messy. You may be editing the final draft when you decide to add a completely new paragraph, an idea that didn’t exist in any of the previous drafts. Nevertheless, if you realize that writing involves many separate tasks, that it is chaotic and unpredictable, you will not be defeated before you begin by criticizing yourself for having to do what all writers do—struggle to find your way, to express your thoughts so that you and your reader understand them.

AUDIENCE AND PURPOSE

A major distinction between writing outside the classroom and writing for a class lies in the audience to whom we write, what novelist and essayist Virginia Woolf referred to as “the face beneath the page.” Job-related writing tasks, for example, include a designated audience and a real purpose. An employee may write to another company proposing a cooperative venture or to a superior requesting a raise. Readers of a newspaper often express their opinions in persuasive letters to the editor. But in a class, students are asked to write papers for the teacher to critique and grade, usually with no specified purpose beyond successfully completing an assignment. Teachers cannot remove themselves from the role of ultimate audience, but for most of the
major writing assignments in this text, we have suggested an additional audience to lend some authenticity to each project and to guide you in your writing choices.

Although different academic disciplines require variations in format, all good writing of an explanatory or persuasive nature is built on a balance between three essential elements: knowledge of the subject or argument, an identified audience, and a clearly defined purpose. The task of thinking about an argument’s purpose and intended audience introduces a significant critical thinking component to an assignment. Only when you take a conscious rhetorical stance toward your writing can you have an appropriate voice and give power to what you write. The goal for you, therefore, is to define your subject or argument, identify your audience, and determine your purpose in writing to this particular audience. (For more on the relationship between writer and audience, see the section on Rogerian strategy in Chapter 4.)

Consideration of one’s audience is not a recent concept. Over 2,000 years ago, Aristotle, known as the father of logic, spoke of an essential triad in argument: logos, ethos, and pathos.

Logos: the use of reason to persuade an audience. (Much more on this in the chapters ahead.)

Ethos: the use of one’s own character and credibility to persuade an audience.

Pathos: the use of emotional appeals to persuade an audience. Empathy with the audience’s concerns would be included in these emotional appeals. (More on this in Chapter 4.)

Aristotle saw the essential bond between writer and reader that leads to meaningful communication. To write convincingly, you must present yourself as a reasonable, sympathetic person and you must convey respect for your readers. Aristotle suggests that effective persuasive writing depends not only on a well-informed writer but also on a writer who is acutely aware of her audience and well-disposed toward them. The same holds true for public speaking.

E-Mail and Text Messaging

The informality encouraged by e-mail and text messaging requires us to carefully consider our audience. Language flies through cyberspace, and text messages are transcribed in a whole new shorthand. Impressions are made quickly. “2mor0” for “tomorrow” is fine in a text message to a friend but not in an e-mail to an instructor or a potential employer. When speaking with others, we each vary our language depending on whom we are speaking to—slang with our friends, even a profanity or two, more formal language when speaking to a boss or teacher. And each family has many words or expressions that they use only with each other. We make these shifts in language without much thought, but when writing we need to become consciously aware of the particular audience we are addressing and then adopt the appropriate language. Getting it right in an e-mail matters in the academic and business worlds, where persuasive writing remains important.
A recent *New York Times* article, which addressed the concerns of many corporations, stressed the high cost to American companies of poorly written e-mails. A university professor, who now heads an online business writing school, quoted an example of a request he received:

> I need help I am writing a essay on writing I work for this company and my boss wants me to help improve the workers writing skills

No punctuation, no attention to the sentence. How far is this employee going? How can he help others?

Writer Brent Staples claims that the information age "requires more high-quality writing from more categories of employees than ever before."

---

**EXERCISE 1B**

**Thinking About Your Audience**

Write an e-mail introducing yourself to your instructor. You will need to include information useful to your instructor, such as why you are taking this class, what writing or logic courses you have already completed, what you expect to gain from the class, and anything else bearing on your participation during the semester or quarter. If your instructor wants you to be in direct contact by e-mail, send this assignment over the Internet; if not, turn in a printout.

---

**WRITING ASSIGNMENT 1**

**Considering Your Audience and Purpose**

Choose any public issue that disturbs you—be it small or large, campus, community, or cosmic—and write two short papers (one to two pages *each*), expressing your
concern. Before you start this assignment, look back in this chapter to the suggestions under "Writing as a Process" and follow the stages outlined there.

1. In the first version, direct your writing to someone connected to, perhaps responsible for, the problem you are concerned about. Your purpose here is to communicate your concern or displeasure and possibly persuade the person responsible to take appropriate action.

2. In the second version, address an individual who is in no way connected to the problem you are disturbed about. Your purpose here is to explain the situation and to inform your reader of something he may know nothing about and is not necessarily in a position to change. This means you must include more background detail than was necessary in your first paper.

Label the two papers (1) and (2) at the top, and clearly identify each audience.

REASON, INTUITION, IMAGINATION, AND METAPHOR

_The heart has its reasons which reason knows nothing of._

—BLAISE PASCAL

While good critical thinking depends on reason and embraces scientific methods, it can also include intuition, imagination, and creativity as well as logic. Our theory of critical thinking welcomes originality, encourages personal opinion, embraces creative thinking, and considers paradox and ambiguity to be central to thinking and writing well. Playwright Tony Kushner learned from his Columbia University Shakespeare professor that "everything in Shakespeare was paradoxical and contradictory." From this, Kushner began "to understand something about life, . . . that two opposites can exist simultaneously." He embraced the notion that theater should present contradictions and thus encourage active critical thought.

The French philosopher Blaise Pascal, quoted above, declared that there were two extravagances: "to exclude reason and to admit only reason." Contemporary biologist Richard Dawkins, supporting this view, claims that scientists must also be poets and thinks that poets are well served by a knowledge of science.

Sometimes a metaphor—a figure of speech that helps us understand one thing in terms of another—can carry, through images and associations, an understanding beyond what explicit reasoning can convey. Seeing comparisons, exploring relationships, is fundamental to successful critical thinking.

In their book _Metaphors We Live By_, linguists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson point out how deeply dependent on implicit metaphor we are when we think and
speak, citing the relationship between the way we use the term argument and the metaphors of war associated with it. Here are a few of their examples:

He attacked every weak point in my argument.
He shot down all of my arguments.
His criticisms were right on target.

Advertising frequently relies on metaphor to deliver its message. Look at the ad below and note all the words that support the war metaphor. The advertising industry...
knows the power of such metaphors, and the medical profession casts many of its approaches to disease in the same language. Strong metaphors create images often more powerful than simple presentation of facts.

Metaphor not only reveals and expresses our thinking, it may also be capable of shaping our thinking, according to psychology professor Lera Boroditsky. She conducted an experiment in which two groups of students were asked to solve the problem of crime in a fictional city. Crime in the community was described as a "virus" to one group, as a "beast" to the other group. The students' proposed solutions reflected the metaphor they were given. Those who were told that crime was a virus suggested investigating root causes of the problem, by eradicating poverty and improving education. Those who were told that crime was a beast proposed catching and jailing criminals and enacting harsher laws.

Writer and political commentator David Brooks describes the way we all use metaphor in our everyday language.

Poetry for Everyday Life

DAVID BROOKS

Here's a clunky but unremarkable sentence that appeared in the British press before the last national election: "Britain's recovery from the worst recession in decades is gaining traction, but confused economic data and the high risk of hung Parliament could yet snuff out its momentum."

The sentence is only worth quoting because in 28 words it contains four metaphors. Economies don’t really gain traction, like a tractor. Momentum doesn’t literally get snuffed out, like a cigarette. We just use those metaphors, without even thinking about it, as a way to capture what is going on.

In his fine new book, I Is an Other, James Geary reports on linguistic research suggesting that people use a metaphor every 10 to 25 words. Metaphors are not rhetorical frills at the edge of how we think, Geary writes. They are at the very heart of it.

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, two of the leading researchers in this field, have pointed out that we often use food metaphors to describe the world of ideas. We devour a book, try to digest raw facts and attempt to regurgitate other people's ideas, even though they might be half-baked.

When talking about relationships, we often use health metaphors. A friend might be involved in a sick relationship. Another might have a healthy marriage.

When talking about argument, we use war metaphors. When talking about time, we often use money metaphors. When talking about liquid metaphors. We dip into savings, sponge off friends or skim funds off the top. Even the job title stockbroker derives from the French word brocleur, the tavern worker who tapped the kegs of beer to get the liquidity flowing.

The psychologist Michael Morris points out that when the stock market is going up, we tend to use agent metaphors, implying the market is a living thing with clear intentions. We say the market climbs or soars or fights its way upward. When the market goes down, on the other hand, we use object metaphors, implying it is inanimate. The market falls, plummets or slides.
Most of us, when asked to stop and think about it, are by now aware of the pervasive nature of metaphorical thinking. But in the normal rush of events, we often see straight through metaphors, unaware of how they refract perceptions. So it’s probably important to pause once a month or so to pierce the illusion that we see the world directly. It’s good to pause to appreciate how flexible and tenuous our grip on reality actually is.

Metaphors help compensate for our natural weaknesses. Most of us are not very good at thinking about abstractions or spiritual states, so we rely on concrete or spatial metaphors to (imperfectly) do the job. A lifetime is pictured as a journey across a landscape. A person who is sad is down in the dumps, while a happy fellow is riding high.

Most of us are not good at understanding new things, so we grasp them imperfectly by relating them metaphorically to things that already exist. That’s a “desktop” on your computer screen.

Metaphors are things we pass down from generation to generation, which transmit a culture’s distinct way of seeing and being in the world. In his superb book Judaism: A Way of Being, David Gelernter notes that Jewish thought uses the image of a veil to describe how Jews perceive God—as a presence to be sensed but not seen, which is intimate and yet apart.

Judaism also emphasizes the metaphor of separateness as a path to sanctification. The Israelites had to separate themselves from Egypt. The Sabbath is separate from the week. Kosher food is separate from the nonkosher. The metaphor describes a life in which one moves from nature and conventional society to the sacred realm.

To be aware of the central role metaphors play is to be aware of how imprecise our most important thinking is. It’s to be aware of the constant need to question metaphors with data—to separate the living from the dead ones, and the authentic metaphors that seek to illuminate the world from the tinny advertising and political metaphors that seek to manipulate it.

Most important, being aware of metaphors reminds you of the central role that poetic skills play in our thought. If much of our thinking is shaped and driven by metaphor, then the skilled thinker will be able to recognize patterns, blend patterns, apprehend the relationships, and pursue unexpected likenesses.

Even the hardest of the sciences depend on a foundation of metaphors. To be aware of metaphors is to be humbled by the complexity of the world, to realize that deep in the undercurrents of thought there are thousands of lenses popping up between us and the world, and that we’re surrounded at all times by what Steven Pinker of Harvard once called “pedestrian poetry.”

**EXERCISE 1C**

**Using Metaphor in Everyday Language**

1. David Brooks lists many examples of metaphors we all use. From these, choose one or two that you use with some frequency to share with the class.

2. Why do we rely on metaphors to express ourselves?

3. Why is it important for us to be aware of the role metaphor plays in thinking and writing? (Note my use of metaphor in this question.)
"I was on the cutting edge. I pushed the envelope. I did the heavy lifting. I was the rainmaker. Then I ran out of metaphors."

Reasoning by Analogy

Analogy, like metaphor, is a comparison of two or more things. But an analogy is explicit, not implicit and suggestive as a metaphor is. When we reason by analogy, we compare two or more things, noting the characteristics they share and suggesting that since they share these characteristics, they probably share other characteristics as well. The war will fail.

In a control rights to the Founding what the

At such as fact
des
vote
Nati
our
citiz
the
who
main

Day
Chapter
parallel:
The
The auth
after the
dedicates

LEO CULLUM\THE NEW YORKER COLLECTION/DEE CARTOON BANK
DAVID HORSEY\HEARST NEWSPAPERS, LLC/SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER
as well. For example, those opposed to the Iraq and Afghanistan wars compare them to
the war in Vietnam. Since the war in Vietnam failed, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan
will fail.

In a letter to the editor, a San Francisco Chronicle reader writes in favor of gun
control. He argues by analogy, believing that if we eliminated slavery, gave voting
rights to women and blacks, and land to Native Americans, all without the help of the
Founding Fathers, then we should be able to end private ownership of guns despite
what the Founding Fathers had to say about it.

What Will It Take?

At some point in American history, we decided that slavery was wrong, despite the
fact that our Founding Fathers owned slaves.

At some point in our history, we decided that women should be able to vote,
despite the fact that our Founding Fathers didn’t give women the vote.

At some point in our history, we decided that black people should be able to
vote, despite the fact our Founding Fathers didn’t think so.

As some point in our history, we decided that it was wrong to take land from
Native Americans, despite the fact that our Founding Fathers didn’t really care
about that.

So what will it take for Americans to start accepting the idea that, despite what
our Founding Fathers thought, guns no longer have a place in the hands of private
citizens in a free country, where everyone has the inalienable right to live without
the fear of getting shot? How many more children must die?

It’s not just Sandy Hook, or Columbine or Virginia Tech. It’s also the 10 children
who die daily from guns. And the thousands more who survived gunshots and are
maimed and disabled for life.

Jimmy Chung, Aptos, Santa Cruz County

Do you find the reasoning by analogy by effective? We will return to this letter in
Chapter 8, “The Language of Argument—Style,” to study the writer’s effective use of
parallel structure.

The following essay, an argument for gun safety, is also based on an analogy.
The author is Rob Cox, a founder of Sandy Hook Promise, a nonprofit group created
after the shooting of 20 first graders and six teachers in Newtown, Connecticut, and
dedicated to supporting innovations in gun and school safety.

Safety Could Pay for Weapons Makers

For four decades until 1999, Volvo led the world in making safety a virtue. Its efforts
paid off handsomely as sales and market share climbed. The Swedish carmaker
charged a premium for its vehicles, and the company eventually was sold for a cool
6.5 billion. The same could be done with guns.

Volvo’s timing was good. From its introduction of a little invention that became
the modern seat belt in 1958 to its sale some 40 years later to Ford Motor Company,
public consciousness in automotive safety blossomed. Volvo's technological lead gave it an edge over rivals who showed less interest in protecting passengers than revving up horsepower.

Something similar could happen to gunsmiths following the Sandy Hook School massacre in December. After all, it took public outrage over horrific automobile fatalities, which peaked at around 55,000 in the early 1970s, to force legislative changes.

Yet innovations by the likes of Volvo showed that market forces could also play a role, not just in fostering good public policy but in creating lucrative businesses.

At present most gun marketing is predicated on power and machismo. But what if the unique selling point of a weapon became safety features, like a trigger that only works in the hands of the gun's owners? . . . The point is that making firearms safer could help the nation to reduce the 30,000 gun deaths a year, including nearly 19,000 that are suicides. But if that isn't incentive enough, there's the money, and the Volvo lesson, to consider.

Starting with the three-point seat belt in the late 1950s, Volvo introduced safety features, from head restraints to side impact protection systems. Sales grew tenfold. By the time the first mandatory seat belt use was enacted in New York State in 1984, Volvo's market share hit a record.

Budding gun entrepreneurs could become rich by emulating Volvo's golden years. Weapons manufacturers could first and foremost tout their product's safety features. And public policy could guide them along that path.

New Jersey, for instance, has a law that would require smart gun technology in all new handguns sold three years after the state's attorney general determines a prototype is safe and commercially available. Other states are considering similar rules.

As the Volvo story underlines, however, government action isn't the only way to rescue American's gun fatalities, which have remained stubbornly high for decades. The only thing more characteristically American than gun ownership is the impulse to create wealth in free and open markets. Let the innovation begin.

For more examples of the use of analogies in written argument, see "The Order of Things" by Malcolm Gladwell in Additional Readings.

**EXERCISE 1D**

*Reasoning by Analogy*

Write a precise description of the analogy at the heart of *Safety Could Pay for Weapons Makers*, followed by a brief evaluation. Does the analogy make sense to you? Do you find it persuasive? Why or why not?
SUMMARY

This book emphasizes the relationship between thinking clearly and writing well and stresses the importance of expressing ourselves persuasively while thinking critically about what we read, view, and hear. As we think critically, we need to understand the world view of others and recognize our own world view.

When writing, we need to think about the audience and the purpose for which we are writing. For an essay to be successful, we need to follow a sequential writing process that avoids formulaic structure and doesn’t rush directly to a finished draft. While our main concern is with analytical thinking and argument, we also embrace creative thought and the imagination.

KEY TERMS

**Analogy**  reasoning by analogy, we compare two or more things, noting the characteristics they share and suggesting that since they share these characteristics, they probably share other characteristics as well.

**Brainstorming**  unrestrained, spontaneous generation of ideas.

**Critical thinking**  discerning or discriminating thought characterized by fairness and open-mindedness.

**Ethos**  the use of one’s own character and credibility to persuade an audience.

**Freewriting**  unrestrained, spontaneous, and continuous generation of complete sentences for a set length of time.

**Logos**  the use of reason to persuade an audience.

**Metaphor**  a figure of speech that imaginatively implies a comparison between one object and another.

**Pathos**  the use of emotional appeals to persuade an audience and to have empathy for the audience’s concerns.

**World view**  a set of assumptions about the world and the behavior of people in it.