
Author: Shane Abrams, Portland State University

This chapter is licensed with a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License Download this book free at: https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/pdxopen/20/

A prior version of this book included an excerpt of “The Vietnam in Me” from “LZ Gator, Vietnam, February 1994” to “Nothing here but ghosts and the wind.”

Excerpt: “I’m home, but the house is gone. Not a sandbag, not a nail or a scrap of wire.

On Gator, we used to say, the wind doesn’t blow, it sucks. Maybe that’s what happened—the wind sucked it all away. My life, my virtue.

In February 1969, 25 years ago, I arrived as a young, terrified pfc. on this lonely little hill in Quang Ngai Province. Back then, the place seemed huge and imposing and permanent. A forward firebase for the Fifth Battalion of the 46th Infantry, 198th Infantry Brigade, LZ Gator was home to 700 or 800 American soldiers, mostly grunts. I remember a tar helipad, a mess hall, a medical station, mortar and artillery emplacements, two volleyball courts, numerous barracks and offices and supply depots and machine shops and entertainment clubs. Gator was our castle. Not safe, exactly, but far preferable to the bush. No land mines here. No paddies bubbling with machine-gun fire.

Maybe once a month, for three or four days at a time, Alpha Company would return to Gator for stand-down, where we took our comforts behind a perimeter of bunkers and concertina wire. There were hot showers and hot meals, ice chests packed with beer, glossy pinup girls, big, black Sony tape decks booming “We gotta get out of this place” at decibels for the deaf. Thirty or 40 acres of almost-America. With a little weed and a lot of beer, we would spend the days of stand-down in flat-out celebration, purely alive, taking pleasure in our own biology, kidneys and livers and lungs and legs, all in their proper alignments. We could breathe here. We could feel our fists uncurl, the pressures approaching normal. The real war, it seemed, was in another solar system. By day, we’d fill sandbags or pull bunker guard. In the evenings, there were outdoor
movies and sometimes live floor shows—pretty Korean girls breaking our hearts in their spangled miniskirts and high leather boots — then afterward we’d troop back to the Alpha barracks for some letter writing or boozing or just a good night’s sleep.

So much to remember. The time we filled a nasty lieutenant’s canteen with mosquito repellent; the sounds of choppers and artillery fire; the slow dread that began building as word spread that in a day or two we’d be heading back to the bush. Pinkville, maybe. The Batangan Peninsula. Spooky, evil places where the land itself could kill you.

Now I stand in this patch of weeds, looking down on what used to be the old Alpha barracks. Amazing, really, what time can do. You’d think there would be something left, some faint imprint, but LZ (Landing Zone) Gator has been utterly and forever erased from the earth. Nothing here but ghosts and wind.”

My Favorite Place

Starbucks has always been my go-to place. Never have I felt so welcomed with opened arms in an environment other than my home. Every time I enter through the translucent glass door, a familiar joyful barista in their signature bright green apron, shouts out “Welcome in!” My mood instantly lifts up and I already feel euphoric. I ambitiously make my way past the wall of signature coffees and desirable coffee mugs with the Starbucks logo of the twin-tailed crowned siren imprinted on them and join the lengthy line of famished customers anxiously standing along the crystal-clear polished pastry case. The layered case features its variety of heavenly, toothsome sweets along with their finest breakfast sandwiches displayed like trophies for everyone to admire. The pleasing scent of flakey butter croissants and toffee doodle cookies turn heads as it leaks its way out through the cracks of the pastry case. The scrumptious aroma of one of the slow-roasted ham and swiss breakfast sandwiches escapes out of the oven as one of the baristas pulls it out, finding its way on my lips and making my mouth water, I can almost taste it.

I listen to the indecisive girls in front of me. “Should I get a caramel macchiato or caramel latte?” says one of the brunettes with urgency as she slowly sways closer to the cashier. “Get an iced caramel macchiato!” shouts her eager friend. They place their
order then move to the end of the bar chatting about how she forgot to order her drink iced. “What can I get for you today?” the attentive and neighborly barista says as she quickly takes out her sharpie. “Grande Ethiopia pour-over,” I say. I pay and take my receipt and make my way to the next counter. A smoky and rich, sweet-caramel breeze wafts up from the espresso machines, racing to my nose, almost strong enough to caffeinate me instantly. I wait patiently for my coffee, zoning out to the sound of milk being aeriated and the crushing sound of iced beverages being blended. My attention is caught by the black display boards hanging above the glossy brick wall behind the bar and register. I marvel at the handcrafted chalk drawings promoting the new seasonal drinks that adds a mellow character to the setting. Another amicable barista heads in my direction, handing me my intense hot black coffee with a cheery smile on her face. Earthy and acidity impressions hit my tongue when I take my first sip. My eyes begin to dilate as I start to unfold the soft and velvety layers of coffee with the hidden notes of dark cocoa and sweet citrus.

I observe the room, admiring its new and sleek modern architecture. The interior has custom murals and exposed brick walls which create a warm atmosphere. Reclaimed slick-smooth woods were used for the bars, tables and condiment stations. The lights in transparent dark-orange colored bulbs dangling from the ceiling, gives the shop a soft and warm hue, making the environment cozy. The chestnut colored tiles surround the bar and register. The smooth, cocoa colored wooden tables are distributed evenly around the mom. The enormous window walls naturally lights the room. I follow the space-grey colored stone bricks beneath my feet and make my way to the pleasantly-warm fireplace with a solid chrome black and gold metal rim around it. A vibrant picture of a green and orange oil painting of Kenya’s safari sits on the mantel above. This small spot gives the whole atmosphere a noticeable warm home feel.

Soft-toned jazz and enthusiastic conversations fill the room, blending harmoniously. A family of five surround one of the circular tables by the entrance, laughing and accusing one another of cheating when one loses at Uno. I can hear the sociable barista behind the bar engaging with one of the regulars about how each other’s weekend went. Other conversations are being made at the condiment bar with the three well-dressed gentlemen in navy blue suits and red ties with neatly combed
hair talk about the overwhelming work week ahead as they sweeten their dark roast coffee with a variety of sweeteners and half and half. Several students have nested at one of the middle tables with their notebooks, laptops and pencils scattered in front of them. The constant clacking of their keyboards starts to create a steady beat. The alerting sound of a timer echoes through the room, going off every fifteen minutes to signal one of the baristas to brew a fresh pot of coffee. The buzzing noise of coffee grinding always follows.

This warm and welcoming, comfortable environment created here is why I always come back to Starbucks. It brings me a place of peace. It’s where I get my VIP treatment—my mind is put to ease and I can feel my muscles unclench from head-to-toe as I continuously take sips of my elegant and balanced coffee that I paired with my favorite soft and flavorful pumpkin loaf. It’s an oasis where I can clear my mind of distractions and focus on work or socialize with my friends or the familiar baristas. It’s my home away from home.
Video: “Running Down the Hill” by Robyn Vazquez

Video: “21” by Patrick Roche
The Story of an Hour\textsuperscript{126} by Kate Chopin

*This story is in the public domain.*

Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble, great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband's death.

It was her sister Josephine who told her, in broken sentences; veiled hints that revealed in half concealing. Her husband's friend Richards was there, too, near her. It was he who had been in the newspaper office when intelligence of the railroad disaster was received, with Brently Mallard's name leading the list of "killed." He had only taken the time to assure himself of its truth by a second telegram, and had hastened to forestall any less careful, less tender friend in bearing the sad message.

She did not hear the story as many women have heard the same, with a paralyzed inability to accept its significance. She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister's arms. When the storm of grief had spent itself she went away to her room alone. She would have no one follow her.

There stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy armchair. Into this she sank, pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul.

She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air. In the street below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which some one was singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves.

There were patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds that had met and piled one above the other in the west facing her window.

She sat with her head thrown back upon the cushion of the chair, quite motionless, except when a sob came up into her throat and shook her, as a child who has cried itself to sleep continues to sob in its dreams.

She was young, with a fair, calm face, whose lines bespoke repression and even a certain strength. But now there was a dull stare in her eyes, whose gaze was fixed away off yonder on one of those patches of blue sky. It was not a glance of reflection, but rather indicated a suspension of intelligent thought.
There was something coming to her and she was waiting for it, fearfully. What was it? She did not know; it was too subtle and elusive to name. But she felt it, creeping out of the sky, reaching toward her through the sounds, the scents, the color that filled the air.

Now her bosom rose and fell tumultuously. She was beginning to recognize this thing that was approaching to possess her, and she was striving to beat it back with her will—as powerless as her two white slender hands would have been.

When she abandoned herself a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips. She said it over and over under her breath: “free, free, free!” The vacant stare and the look of terror that had followed it went from her eyes. They stayed keen and bright. Her pulses beat fast, and the coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body.

She did not stop to ask if it were or were not a monstrous joy that held her. A clear and exalted perception enabled her to dismiss the suggestion as trivial.

She knew that she would weep again when she saw the kind, tender hands folded in death; the face that had never looked save with love upon her, fixed and gray and dead. But she saw beyond that bitter moment a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely. And she opened and spread her arms out to them in welcome.

There would be no one to live for her during those coming years; she would live for herself. There would be no powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow-creature. A kind intention or a cruel intention made the act seem no less a crime as she looked upon it in that brief moment of illumination.

And yet she had loved him—sometimes. Often she had not. What did it matter! What could love, the unsolved mystery, count for in face of this possession of self-assertion which she suddenly recognized as the strongest impulse of her being!

“Free! Body and soul free!” she kept whispering.

Josephine was kneeling before the closed door with her lips to the keyhole, imploring for admission. “Louise, open the door! I beg; open the door—you will make yourself ill. What are you doing, Louise? For heaven’s sake open the door.”
“Go away. I am not making myself ill.” No; she was drinking in a very elixir of life through that open window.

Her fancy was running riot along those days ahead of her. Spring days, and summer days, and all sorts of days that would be her own. She breathed a quick prayer that life might be long. It was only yesterday she had thought with a shudder that life might be long.

She arose at length and opened the door to her sister’s importunities. There was a feverish triumph in her eyes, and she carried herself unwittingly like a goddess of Victory. She clasped her sister’s waist, and together they descended the stairs. Richards stood waiting for them at the bottom.

Some one was opening the front door with a latchkey. It was Brently Mallard who entered, a little travel-stained, composedly carrying his grip-sack and umbrella. He had been far from the scene of accident, and did not even know there had been one. He stood amazed at Josephine’s piercing cry; at Richards’ quick motion to screen him from the view of his wife.

But Richards was too late.
When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease—of joy that kills.

Excerpt from My Bondage and My Freedom by Frederick Douglass

I lived in the family of Master Hugh, at Baltimore, seven years, during which time—as the almanac makers say of the weather—my condition was variable. The most interesting feature of my history here, was my learning to read and write, under somewhat marked disadvantages. In attaining this knowledge, I was compelled to resort to indirections by no means congenial to my nature, and which were really humiliating to me. My mistress—who, as the reader has already seen, had begun to teach me was suddenly checked in her benevolent design, by the strong advice of her husband. In faithful compliance with this advice, the good lady had not only ceased to instruct me, herself, but had set her face as a flint against my learning to read by any means. It is due, however, to my mistress to say, that she did not adopt this course in all its stringency at the first. She either thought it unnecessary, or she lacked the depravity indispensable to shutting me up in mental darkness. It was, at least, necessary for her
to have some training, and some hardening, in the exercise of the slaveholder’s prerogative, to make her equal to forgetting my human nature and character, and to treating me as a thing destitute of a moral or an intellectual nature. Mrs. Auld—my mistress—was, as I have said, a most kind and tender-hearted woman; and, in the humanity of her heart, and the simplicity of her mind, she set out, when I first went to live with her, to treat me as she supposed one human being ought to treat another.

It is easy to see, that, in entering upon the duties of a slaveholder, some little experience is needed. Nature has done almost nothing to prepare men and women to be either slaves or slaveholders. Nothing but rigid training, long persisted in, can perfect the character of the one or the other. One cannot easily forget to love freedom; and it is as hard to cease to respect that natural love in our fellow creatures. On entering upon the career of a slaveholding mistress, Mrs. Auld was singularly deficient; nature, which fits nobody for such an office, had done less for her than any lady I had known. It was no easy matter to induce her to think and to feel that the curly-headed boy, who stood by her side, and even leaned on her lap; who was loved by little Tommy, and who loved little Tommy in turn; sustained to her only the relation of a chattel. I was more than that, and she felt me to be more than that. I could talk and sing; I could laugh and weep; I could reason and remember; I could love and hate. I was human, and she, dear lady, knew and felt me to be so. How could she, then, treat me as a brute, without a mighty struggle with all the noble powers of her own soul. That struggle came, and the will and power of the husband was victorious. Her noble soul was overthrown; but, he that overthrew it did not, himself, escape the consequences. He, not less than the other parties, was injured in his domestic peace by the fall.

When I went into their family, it was the abode of happiness and contentment. The mistress of the house was a model of affection and tenderness. Her fervent piety and watchful uprightness made it impossible to see her without thinking and feeling—“that woman is a Christian.” There was no sorrow nor suffering for which she had not a tear, and there was no innocent joy for which she did not a smile. She had bread for the hungry, clothes for the naked, and comfort for every mourner that came within her reach. Slavery soon proved its ability to divest her of these excellent qualities, and her home of its early happiness. Conscience cannot stand much violence. Once thoroughly
broken down, who is he that can repair the damage? It may be broken toward the slave, on Sunday, and toward the master on Monday. It cannot endure such shocks. It must stand entire, or it does not stand at all. If my condition waxed bad, that of the family waxed not better. The first step, in the wrong direction, was the violence done to nature and to conscience, in arresting the benevolence that would have enlightened my young mind. In ceasing to instruct me, she must begin to justify herself to herself; and, once consenting to take sides in such a debate, she was riveted to her position. One needs very little knowledge of moral philosophy, to see where my mistress now landed. She finally became even more violent in her opposition to my learning to read, than was her husband himself. She was not satisfied with simply doing as well as her husband had commanded her, but seemed resolved to better his instruction. Nothing appeared to make my poor mistress—after her turning toward the downward path—more angry, than seeing me, seated in some nook or corner, quietly reading a book or a newspaper. I have had her rush at me, with the utmost fury, and snatch from my hand such newspaper or book, with something of the wrath and consternation which a traitor might be supposed to feel on being discovered in a plot by some dangerous spy.

Mrs. Auld was an apt woman, and the advice of her husband, and her own experience, soon demonstrated, to her entire satisfaction, that education and slavery are incompatible with each other. When this conviction was thoroughly established, I was most narrowly watched in all my movements. If I remained in a separate room from the family for any considerable length of time, I was sure to be suspected of having a book, and was at once called upon to give an account of myself. All this, however, was entirely too late. The first, and never to be retraced, step had been taken. In teaching me the alphabet, in the days of her simplicity and kindness, my mistress had given me the “inch,” and now, no ordinary precaution could prevent me from taking the “ell.”

Seized with a determination to learn to read, at any cost, I hit upon many expedients to accomplish the desired end. The plea which I mainly adopted, and the one by which I was most successful, was that of using my young white playmates, with whom I met in the streets as teachers. I used to carry, almost constantly, a copy of Webster’s spelling book in my pocket; and, when sent of errands, or when play time was allowed me, I would step, with my young friends, aside, and take a lesson in
spelling. I generally paid my tuition fee to the boys, with bread, which I also carried in my pocket. For a single biscuit, any of my hungry little comrades would give me a lesson more valuable to me than bread. Not every one, however, demanded this consideration, for there were those who took pleasure in teaching me, whenever I had a chance to be taught by them. I am strongly tempted to give the names of two or three of those little boys, as a slight testimonial of the gratitude and affection I bear them, but prudence forbids; not that it would injure me, but it might, possibly, embarrass them; for it is almost an unpardonable offense to do any thing, directly or indirectly, to promote a slave’s freedom, in a slave state. It is enough to say, of my warm-hearted little play fellows, that they lived on Philpot street, very near Durgin & Bailey’s shipyard.

Although slavery was a delicate subject, and very cautiously talked about among grown up people in Maryland, I frequently talked about it—and that very freely—with the white boys. I would, sometimes, say to them, while seated on a curb stone or a cellar door, “I wish I could be free, as you will be when you get to be men.” “You will be free, you know, as soon as you are twenty-one, and can go where you like, but I am a slave for life. Have I not as good a right to be free as you have?” Words like these, I observed, always troubled them; and I had no small satisfaction in wringing from the boys, occasionally, that fresh and bitter condemnation of slavery, that springs from nature, unseared and unperverted. Of all consciences let me have those to deal with which have not been bewildered by the cares of life. I do not remember ever to have met with a boy, while I was in slavery, who defended the slave system; but I have often had boys to console me, with the hope that something would yet occur, by which I might be made free.
I rarely read a book that I find to be transformative, that not only adds to my knowledge and understanding of an issue but significantly alters my way of thinking about it. *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates is one of those works. It’s a new book and currently sits at number two on the *New York Times*’ nonfiction best seller list.

Coates’ book is presented as a letter to his teenage son. It’s his attempt to describe what it’s like growing up black in present-day America from the inside out, using his own life as his touchstone. He presents his world from a personal, subjective point of view. This isn’t a sociological or political text. In the book Coates renders his confusion, his questions, his grief, his anger and his joys with literary clarity, and with a depth that can’t be captured in a dry, “objective” discussion of the issues.

It would be incorrect for me to say I “understand” the book. You can only understand the world he’s trying to capture if you’ve lived it, if you’ve felt it in your psyche and your nerve endings. Intellectual understanding, even combined with valiant attempts at empathy, can’t substitute for being there on a day by day, minute by minute basis. I’m an older, white, privileged male who does his best to comprehend the nature of racism in this country, but I know I’m looking at that world from the outside. Coates grants me the ability to get as close to what the life of a black man is like as any recent work I can think of.

People compare Coates’ book to James Baldwin’s electrifying 1963 work, *The Fire Next Time*. It’s a valid comparison, but for me, the experience of reading *Between the World and Me* is more like what I felt when I read Ralph Ellison’s great 1952 novel, *Invisible Man*. That’s the only other book I can remember that gave me the momentary sense of living the black experience, and helped me understand how distant it is from my experiences and how limited my understanding will always be.

This book deserves to join the literary canon alongside works by Baldwin, Ellison and Toni Morrison. So let me end by quoting what Morrison wrote about *Between the World and Me*. 

---

*Between the World and Me*: An Important Book on Race and Racism by David Saifer

Originally published and available via *Tucson Weekly*. Reproduced with permission from the author and publication.
I’ve been wondering who might fill the intellectual void that plagued me after James Baldwin died. Clearly it is Ta-Nehisi Coates. The language of *Between the World and Me*, like Coates’s journey, is visceral, eloquent, and beautifully redemptive. And its examination of the hazards and hopes of black male life is as profound as it is revelatory. This is required reading.

**Untitled**

(A text wrestling analysis of “Girl” by Jamaica Kincaid)

Societal norms, as well as the skewed expectations of women in society, are in large part passed down from older generations (as well as often being enforced by older generations) to susceptible young children who are just beginning to form their own moral code. “Girl” is an unconventional poem, written by Jamaica Kincaid, that illustrates a mother’s detailed instructions on what her daughter must do in order for her to be accepted and successful in society at that time. Separated by semicolons, the mother relentlessly lists the rules and duties forced onto women at that time, never allowing her to intervene or even question what she was being told. This blind (almost mindless) list of expectations of women emphasizes the oppressed role that women are faced with, and often expected to comply with without question.

As children, our morals and values are shaped not only by our own experiences, but that of our family; wisdom, along with hard life lessons that have been learned over years and generations, are passed down from a mother to child. Although the identity of the narrator is never implicitly revealed, I believe that it is a mother passing on life lessons (as bleak as they may be) to her daughter. You can see this mother-daughter relationship best in Kincaid’s concluding lines, “always squeeze bread to make sure it’s fresh; *but what if the baker won’t let me feel the bread?* you mean to say after all you are really going to be the kind of woman who the baker won’t let near the bread?” (Kincaid 129). The italicized line signals that the daughter (or the “girl”) is speaking here. There is only one other instance in the poem where the daughter intervenes, interrupting her mother’s cascading list of teachings; early in the poem, the mother asks (or rather asserts), “is it true that you sing benna in Sunday school?” and then later insists, “don’t sing benna in Sunday school” (128). Chiming in a bit late, the daughter
defensively inserts, “but I don’t sing benna on Sundays at all, and never in Sunday school” (128). In this instance, the mother does not acknowledge or respond to what the daughter has said, rather just continues on with her sporadic list of instructions (like a chant of “this is how you…” and “don’t…”). This illustration of the mother as a clear authoritative figure that is educating her child of the gender roles that are present (and that must be followed!) in their present society is a great representation of how these notions survive and are passed down from teachings of older generations.

Concerning the structure of the poem “Girl”, I believe that Kincaid made the choice to make her poem into one large paragraph and use semicolons to separate the mother’s advice and commands (without ending the sentence) in order to convey that all of the items on the mother’s list are related in the sense that, when they are applied together, the sum of these actions and behaviors equals what societal and gender norms say it means to be a well-behaved woman. Having the poem structured this way also creates a sense of power for the mother figure because the discussion is extremely one-sided, and her unending breath creates the sense of urgency that she must get through everything she has to say, and she doesn’t even have time to stop and breath in between her lessons. For me, this urgency projects what I consider to be fear from the mother of what will happen to her daughter if she doesn’t learn these lessons or behave according to society. This fear is most likely rooted from her own negative personal experiences, as well as knowledge passed down from former generations.

The mother does not want her daughter to be rejected from or reprimanded by society. So, although the mother is delivering her advice in such way that seems cruel and impersonal, I believe that it emphasizes her seriousness and strong belief for what she is saying. Finally, I propose that this informal structure is a method meant to contrast the insignificance that the mother feels about proper grammar (or even proper education) with the importance she feels towards having her daughter behave as a proper, well-trained woman.

Works Cited
A thought-provoking question arises early in Le Guin’s fairytale: “How is one to tell about joy?” (Le Guin 2), as if she is troubled by the idea of trying to describe joy to the reader. Perhaps she knows the reader will not understand happiness. For how can one understand happiness if they have never experienced it before? “We have almost lost hold; we can no longer describe a happy man, nor make any celebration of joy” (Le Guin 2). With the increase in technology and the rise in power of corporations, we have been receding from happiness. Every big event or holiday celebration is exploding with advertisements, informing us on more “stuff” we could have. Few of these advertisements, almost none, predict an enlightened future, free from overbearing material things. Instead, our celebrations should more similarly follow that of the summer festival of Omelas.

Le Guin begins her story describing the fictional town during its summer festival. This festival consists of different processions—one of them being dance—where citizens of the town celebrate in the streets. “In other streets the music beat faster, the shimmering of gong and tambourine, and the people went dancing” (Le Guin 1). The people of Omelas crowd in the streets to play music and dance, enjoying in the company of their neighbors. One of the factors in this society’s happiness is dance. Later in the passage Le Guin goes on to describe a procession of nudes offering rituals of sex to members of society. “Surely the beautiful nudes can just wander about,
offering themselves like divine soufflés to the hunger of the needy and the rapture of the flesh. Let them join the processions” (Le Guin 3). The joyful stimulation of lust: nothing brings more joy than a lover’s touch. But what else does a society need to be happy beside loving and dancing with others? How about children in the Omelas? Le Guin describes that children are raised communally in this fictional society: “Let the offspring of these rituals [processions of sex] be beloved and looked after by all” (Le Guin 3). In Omelas the infants and children are taken care of by the entire town. This symbolizes the unity in the town and the fact that everyone cares for one another. This may seem like a hard for people of today to grasp, because our society teaches us to only look out for ourselves and things that will stave off our never-ending hunger for joy. Although there are multiple endorphin producers that curb the appetite of reasonable happiness, there are many that set our society’s joy apart from this fictional town’s.

One of the main differences between Le Guin’s society and ours is the share we place in material items. Our society is caught up on material items, using them to assess personal happiness levels. This is a place of discord between the people in the fictional town and people today: “I think that there would be no cars or helicopters in and above the streets; this follows from the fact that the people of Omelas are happy people” (Le Guin 3). The citizens of Omelas don’t take the same pride or comfort in objects as we do. The author is hinting to another reason our society is not happy. Le Guin feels that machines are no means of measuring happiness: the residents of Omelas “could perfectly well have central heating, subway trains, washing machines… Or they could have none of it” (Le Guin 3). This follows from the idea that material items are not what makes these people happy. One of the biggest contrasts between our society and Omelas is the investment we put towards material possessions; people in Omelas thrive on a different kind of happiness.

The author then goes on to contrast the types of happiness and joy experienced by both groups of people: “The trouble is that we have a bad habit… of considering happiness as something rather stupid” (Le Guin 2). Le Guin is conveying the idea that when a society such as ours deems happiness as unimportant, we will start to lose all sense of the word. This is perhaps the reason our society values power, wealth, and
weapons over happiness. When a culture condemns knowledge and praises violence, their reality of happiness becomes skewed.

The author continues the juxtaposition between her fictional society and ours: “The joy built upon the successful slaughter is not the right kind of joy” (Le Guin 4). Happiness is not something that can be bought, stolen, or won in battle, and joy isn’t found by means of power and pain for the people of Omelas. They don’t focus on violence and wealth: “But there is no king. They did not use swords or keep slaves…. [They] also got on without the stock exchange, the advertisement, the secret police, and the bomb” (Le Guin 2). She contrasts our society from theirs by highlighting these differences. The other main difference between the societies being the value we place on the harm and hurt of others.

However, Le Guin’s society may more closely resemble our society than first thought. The child, found in the basement tool closet of one of the town’s buildings, is described by the author as “feeble-minded” or “born defective” (Le Guin 5). It is kept there solely for the sake of the town’s happiness, enabling citizens in the streets above to reap joy from the festival. This compares to today’s society in the sense that people rush through life paying no attention to the needy or homeless, only seldom stealing a glance to reassure themselves that they do indeed have it better. This is where our society generates happiness; to know that we have it better than someone else somehow brings us joy. However, it is wrong for a population to remain happy based on the suffering of a single person or persons. The story goes on to describe that everyone in the town goes to see the child at least once, not one person offering a single shred of help to the poor, withering child. The people of Omelas know if they extended any means of help or gratitude to the child, the entire town will be stripped of all the joy and happiness they experience. This is a conscious choice the citizens must make daily: to idly stand by knowing of the suffering child.

Moreover, I infer that the author intended the child in the tool closet to have a much greater meaning. The child is an allusion to the idiom of “having skeletons in the closet.” It symbolizes the very thing that keeps everyone from experiencing true joy— “the right kind of joy” (Le Guin 4). As mentioned, Le Guin points out that the child is what holds this fictional town together, “They would like to do something for this child.
But there is nothing they can do…. [If] it were cleaned and fed and comforted..., in that
day and hour all the prosperity and beauty and delight of Omelas would wither and be
destroyed” (Le Guin 4). Much like the people of the town, we rely on past mistakes or
haunting memories to sprout into the people we are today. In the story, there are
members of society that can’t handle the guilt festering from knowing of the broken-
down child, so they leave behind the “joyous” town. The ones who walk away from
Omelas are searching for something more profound—the true meaning of happiness.

The biggest problem with our society is that we are too focused on individual gain
and not enough on the happiness and well-being of everyone. We do not need video
games, treadmills, or even cars and helicopters to be happy. Nor is happiness
determined by account balances, high scores, and followers. While our society feels like
we have a sense of joy and happiness it is truly a mask for selfish desires. This clouded
iteration of happiness is what keeps us from experiencing true joy. While the fictional
town might fall into similar shortcomings as we do, they are far closer to discovering
what true joy exactly means. As Le Guin reiterates, what makes the fictional town
joyous is a “boundless and generous contentment, a magnanimous triumph felt not
against some outer enemy but in communion with the finest and fairest souls of all men”
(Le Guin 4). While this might be close, the true meaning of happiness is the coming
together of all individuals to take solace purely in the company of others while
eradicating the suffering of all.

Works Cited
Le Guin, Ursula. “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas.” The Unreal and the Real,
Moonlight (Original Motion Picture Soundtrack)

Read the *Pitchfork* article on Moonlight's Original Motion Picture Soundtrack.

Inauthenticity, Inadequacy, and Transience: The Failure of Language in “Prufrock”

“The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” widely regarded as the work that brought T.S. Eliot into a position of influence and prominence amongst his literary contemporaries, delineates the psychosocial trappings of a first-person speaker struck by the impossibility of identity, interaction, and authenticity in a modern society. Although the poem establishes J. Alfred Prufrock, a typical ‘anti-hero’ of modernist style, as its speaker and central focus, Eliot seeks to generalize to a broader social commentary: the piece reveals the paralyzing state of universal disempowerment in social interaction by exploring a broken system of signification and identity.

Eliot’s poem filters its communication through the first-person speaker, J. Alfred Prufrock; however, the audience is implicated directly and indirectly in the consciousness of Prufrock. Ironically, the central conflict of the poem is the subject’s inability to engage and communicate with the world around him. However, in multiple fashions, even in the very process of performance and reading of the poem, we the audience are interpellated into Prufrock’s hellish existence. The epigraph of “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” draws from Dante’s *Inferno*, immediately conjuring the idea of Hell for the audience. The epigraph, in conjunction with the first line of the piece—“Let us go then, you and I” (1)—and the repetition of second-person and collective first-person pronouns, implicates the reader in an implied tour of Prufrock’s personal Hell, a state of imprisonment within his own consciousness.

Prufrock is a speaker characterized first and foremost by overwhelming fear and alienation, stemming from his hypersensitivity to time, his disillusionment with the failure of communication, and his inability to construct a stable self. He frequently questions his capacity to relate to those around him, wondering repeatedly, “[H]ow should I presume?” (54, 61). Prufrock, worrisome over the audacity implicit in *presumption* and fearful of the consequences, hesitates to engage at all, instead setting himself in frustrated isolation and insecurity. Throughout the work, Eliot insists that one of the few certainties of Prufrock’s bleak existence is, paradoxically, uncertainty: from Prufrock’s
overarching and unnamed “overwhelming question” (10) to the oft-quoted “Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach” (122), the clearest recurring element of the poem is Prufrock’s equivocation. The ambiguity of consequence is too dangerous for Prufrock. He is concerned that his participation in society shall “disturb the universe” (45) and so chooses rather to retreat into his tangled web of hypotheticals.

Eliot symbolizes the society Prufrock so fears in the third stanza as a yellow fog, invading the descriptions of the architecture and appearance of the city.

> The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,
> The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes,
> Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,
> Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,
> Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,
> Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,
> And seeing that it was a soft October night,
> Curled once about the house, and fell asleep. (15-22)

The description of this yellow fog is animalistic and untamed. Its presence is quiet but oppressive, weighing heavily on the tone of the poem with the sort of gaseous intractability and inescapability of our fluid and chaotic social formation and the hegemony that it relies upon. The yellow fog figuratively permeates the entire piece, ubiquitous and stifling, but most evidently as it encroaches on Prufrock’s discussion and distortion of time, beginning in the following stanza.

While the third stanza most overtly draws attention to Prufrock’s temporal hyper-awareness (using the frequent repetition of the word “time”), Eliot constructs an underlying theme of impermanence as early as the epigraph and first stanza of the poem. The original speaker of the epigraph, Guido da Montefeltro, reminds us of the imprisoning and irreversible flow of time, and signal words like “one-night” (6) and “tedious” (8) in the first stanza highlight a hyper-awareness of time. In spite of Prufrock’s implied worldview that genuine social interaction is dangerous, impossible, or even futile, he is painfully aware of the disappearance of opportunity within his hesitation. He admits, “I have measured out my life with coffee spoons” (51), “I grow old … I grow old …” (120), and, reflecting on his imprisonment, wonders, “[H]ow should I begin / To spit
out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?” (59-60). In his position of retrospect, Prufrock imbues a clear tone of regret and loss, noting that he has expended most of his life in apprehension; he links his spent time to the humdrum by means of the “coffee spoons,” to the useless and disposable by means of “butt-ends.” By integrating a theme of transience and a tone of urgency, Eliot begins to explore Prufrock’s social fears while also preparing to demonstrate the failure of language, as I discuss later. Considering the entanglement of the reader in the poem’s exploration of Prufrock’s psychological torture, we read that transience and mortality command all of our day-to-day actions and interactions—and how could this not leave us terrified and alienated like Prufrock himself?

As a consequence of such social fear and detachment, Eliot suggests, Prufrock struggles to establish public or personal identity: because he cannot truly associate with other members of his world, he cannot classify himself within a framework of socially-defined identity. Prufrock frames his failure to adopt an archetype using a strikingly dehumanizing synecdoche: “I should have been a pair of ragged claws / Scuttling across the floors of silent seas” (73-74). Prufrock finds it more fitting that he be separated from the species than to continually find himself inadequate to the measure of social roles. These lines directly precede a process in which Prufrock evades commitment (as we learn is characteristic) by presenting three models of which he falls short, and then discarding the possibility of ever identifying his purpose.

First, Prufrock summons John the Baptist as a prototype by envisioning his own “head (grown slightly bald) brought in upon a platter” (82), but then immediately negates the comparison in the next line: “I am no prophet” (83). Prufrock identifies with the tragic, violent end of John the Baptist, reminding us of his overwhelming fear of the outside world. He makes clear that he can relate only to the death of the man, but not to the life: Prufrock believes that he lacks some essence of a prophet—perhaps charisma or confidence, perhaps respectability or status.

Prufrock seeks to find a more apt comparison, now considering a person as socially tortured as he but who ultimately discovered meaning. Prufrock attempts to adopt a different Biblical figure as a model of identity:

Would it have been worth while […]
To say: “I am Lazarus, come from the dead,
Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all”—
If one, settling a pillow by her head,
Should say: “That is not what I meant at all.
That is not it, at all.” (90-98)

By invoking the character of Lazarus,¹ Prufrock hopes to procure an archetype which fits him better than that of John the Baptist. However, Prufrock realizes that this mold is not adequate either; he questions whether he could interact with someone even with the support of enlightening, didactic knowledge of the afterlife. In so doing, he effectively ‘tries on’ an identity, only to abandon it upon fear of being misunderstood.

Ultimately, Prufrock comments on the ignobility of his very equivocation: “No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be” (111). Prufrock is intensely aware of his reluctance to commit, to make a decision, reminiscent of the tragic Dane—but he actively degrades himself by rejecting the comparison. He suggests that, if anything, he is only fit to be a supporting character, and even then, only an obsequious and foolish one.

[I am] an attendant lord, one that will do
To swell a progress, start a scene or two,
Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,
Defential, glad to be of use,
Politic, cautious, and meticulous;
Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;
At time, indeed, almost ridiculous—
Almost, at times, the Fool. (112-9)

After the adoption and abandonment of three ambitious archetypes (John the Baptist, Lazarus, and Hamlet), Prufrock’s “almost” in lines 118 and 119 tells us that he

¹ There is some ambiguity regarding to which Lazarus—Lazarus of Bethany or Lazarus of “Dives and Lazarus”—Eliot alludes. Although Eliot does not specify in the text of the poem, I imagine that line 95 implies that it is the latter, and it is under this assumption that I continue analysis.
is even reluctant to embody a supporting character with a clearly defined role. Again, considering the involvement of the reader in Prufrock’s plight, Eliot tells us that the literary and social characters which shape our models of human identity are inauthentic—that perhaps we are all destined to be no more than backing players to fill out a scene, or if we are lucky, provide comic relief.

To better understand Prufrock’s disenfranchisement, we must recognize Eliot’s portrayal of human interaction as broken, inadequate, and false. Within the structure of the poem, Eliot seems to imply the inadequacy of direct communication through circuitous, repetitious, and ambiguous text. Even as Prufrock introduces his “overwhelming question,” he almost simultaneously refuses our inquiry to understand what he communicates—“Oh, do not ask, ‘What is it?’” (9-10). By first calling attention to the ever-fleeting moments of time to instill a tone of haste, and then exacerbating those feelings with Prufrock’s continued hesitation, Eliot highlights the infinite insufficiency of language. Even though there will be “time yet for a hundred indecisions, / And for a hundred visions and revisions, / Before the taking of a toast and tea” (27-34), “in a minute there is time / For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse” (47-48). Eliot’s recursive language implies that while there is time, each moment will be inevitably filled with the paralyzing equivocation that we have come to expect from Prufrock. In a frustrated interjection, Prufrock sums it up well: “It is impossible to say just what I mean!” (104).

More subtly, though, Eliot incorporates only a few voices aside from Prufrock himself, and it is these characters who especially illuminate the alienating nature of interaction and language for Prufrock. It is important to note that while the entirety of “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” seems to be an argumentative internal monologue within Prufrock’s consciousness, Eliot provides brief voices from hypothetical speakers imagined through the mediation of Prufrock’s mind.

The unnamed women of the poem are particularly telling: “In the room the women come and go / Talking of Michelangelo” (35-6). This seeming non sequitur is repeated twice within the course of four stanzas. Between the two occurrences of this sentence, Prufrock reassures us (and, in turn, himself) that “there will be time / To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet” (26-27). Eliot combines a deliberate
absence of identifying characteristics of these women, the phrase “come and go,” and a reference to inauthenticity of identity; this combination implies that these women are fungible, and that their commentary on the celebrated artist is merely a façade to suggest sophistication. They offer no substance of interaction beyond falsehood, flowing in and out of a room with identical, generic conversation while bearing contrived faces, formulated only to meet other contrived faces. In this way, Prufrock is disillusioned and discouraged from communication, realizing his mistrust of language for its inherent unreliability. We, in turn, are encouraged to perceive and reject the duplicity of common social interaction.

The subsequent hypothetical speakers in the poem seem to explain and rationalize Prufrock’s fears. In their sole moments of voice throughout the entire text, Prufrock insists that these speakers will criticize his appearance—“How his hair is growing thin!” (41) and “But how his arms and legs are thin!” (44)—or his failure to communicate, saying, “That is not what I meant at all. / That is not it, at all” (97-98, 109-110). Considering his anxieties of language, it is no surprise that Eliot’s character recognizes the quickly-misunderstood nature of communication beyond the superficial “talk of Michelangelo.” Nevertheless, Prufrock fears criticism for inadequacies which he must already recognize in himself: his deteriorating physical appearance, wasting away with each measured-out coffee spoon, or his inability to control language. This tension, this certainty of degrading or misconstrued response, further contributes to Eliot’s implication of a broken system of language as embodied in Prufrock’s alienation.

The penultimate voices Prufrock imagines, the mermaids, identify Prufrock’s proximity to interaction. In another moment of doubt and seemingly scattered thought, Prufrock tells us he has “heard the mermaids singing, each to each” (124). These mermaids symbolize Prufrock’s last appeal for communicative redemption. But alas, Prufrock realizes his isolation—“I do not think that they will sing to me” (125)—and it is human language itself leaves us with the final crushing words of the poem:

I have seen them [the mermaids] riding seaward on the waves
Combing the white hair of the waves blown back
When the wind blows the water white and black.
We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown
Till human voices wake us, and we drown. (126-31)

This final contrast serves to remind us that while Prufrock is close enough to hear, close enough to “linger in the chambers of the sea,” such hopes are dream-like, tenuous, ultimately shattered by human voices and all-engulfing reality. The reader will note that Prufrock and Eliot have shifted back to the collective first-person pronoun “we” for the final stanza, and distinguish in line 130 that the referent is not the sea-girls and Prufrock, but rather Prufrock and another party; we can reasonably interpret the other party is the audience. Eliot is illuminating once again that the plight of J. Alfred Prufrock and the plight of all humanity are parallel in their morbidity, futility, and failure. It is not just Prufrock who drowns; it is us.

J. Alfred Prufrock’s quest to construct a genuine, personal expression—a “love song,” even—results in an excursion through the infernal frustration of Prufrock’s psychosocial imprisonment. In his portrayal of this character’s alienation, indecision, fear, and disillusionment, T.S. Eliot demands that we too, wandering through certain half-deserted streets, are victims of the putrid yellow-smoke society around us: the snares of inauthentic identity, broken language, and constantly vanishing time.

Works Cited

Why Our Feminism Must Be Intersectional (And 3 Ways to Practice It) [article] by Jarune Uwuajaren and Jamie Utt. Available via Everyday Feminism.¹³²

Economics and Obesity¹³³
Eating healthy can be difficult for everyone. You have to figure out what is healthy and find out what diet fits your goals, then you have the struggle of actually sticking to the diet and avoiding the temptation of junk food. However, eating a nutritious diet can become even more complicated if you are poor and live in a low-income area. Healthy food is too expensive for low-income people, forcing them to buy cheaper and
less healthy alternatives. People may not even have access to unprocessed foods, like fruits and vegetables, if they live in poor neighborhoods that do not have a grocery store or supermarket. The lack of access to affordable, healthy, and unprocessed foods leads to an increased rate of obesity for low-income people, and current policies and interventions are not effective and need to be changed to help decrease rates of obesity.

Obesity has been a problem in the United States for a long time. In the 1980s, the number of obese people began to increase rapidly. The percentage of obese adults went from 15.0% in 1980 to 32.9% in 2004, more than doubling (Hurt 781). Obesity can be extremely damaging to the body and can lead to other chronic diseases, such as diabetes and hypertension. It is clear and has been for a long time, that obesity is an epidemic in America, and researchers are trying to find the cause. Obesity is commonly associated with people picking food solely based on taste and not on nutritional content, leading them to choose delicious junk food over nutritious vegetables. While this is true for some, the rates of obesity were found to be higher in American counties that were poverty-dense (Levine 2667). This is not the only study to find that obesity affects the poor more than others, as a study ran by U.S. Government found that rates of obesity and diet-related chronic diseases were highest in the most impoverished populations (Story 261). Obesity is affecting those who are least able to cope with it, as obesity and related chronic diseases can have a serious economic impact on people, especially those with diabetes. People with diabetes spend around 2.3 times as much on general medical care a year than someone without diabetes, and on average a diabetic person spends about $7,900 a year just on medical expenses associated with diabetes (Yang 1033). These costs are extremely damaging to low-income people who may already have trouble getting by as it is, and it is important that the economic causes of obesity are examined so that policies and interventions can be designed to help protect public health.

Higher rates of obesity in low-income areas has been associated with a lack of access to healthy foods. Many of these low-income areas are classified as food deserts, meaning there is nowhere to buy fresh fruits, vegetables, or other unprocessed foods. The nearest grocery store or supermarket can be over a mile away, as it is for Casey
Bannister a resident of East Portland, Oregon. The closest grocery store to her is a mile and a half away, which can be hard for her to walk or bike especially when she has bags of groceries (Peacher). This is a common problem for many Americans who also live in food deserts. Many people have to rely solely on nearby convenience stores for food. These stores rarely sell fresh fruits, vegetables, or unprocessed meats and have a large selection of unhealthy foods. Along with that, the convenience stores found in low-income areas were more often small, independent stores which sold food for higher prices than chain stores (Beaulac), meaning consumers in poor neighborhoods were spending more there than they would in stores found in higher-income neighborhoods.

There is an appealingly simple answer to food deserts: add a grocery store. However, merely adding a grocery store is not going to solve the obesity problem in impoverished areas, as that is only one part of the problem. According to a study run by researcher Steven Cummins, the stores added to food deserts in Philadelphia did not impact that amount of fruits and vegetables consumed. He attributed this to many causes, including the fact that the kind of stores added may not necessarily sell cheaper food (Corapi). While food deserts do contribute to obesity, the main economic cause is more likely the price of healthy, nutritious food. A healthy diet is too expensive to be accessible to low-income people and families, even if they do have access to a supermarket.

Nutritious foods like fruits and vegetables, while healthy, are low in calories. Unhealthier foods have high amounts of calories for a much lower cost, making them extremely appealing to families on a budget. These calories are made up of grains and starches as well as added fats and sugars, which have been linked to an increased risk for obesity (Drewnowski 265S). Foods like these are quite clearly unhealthy, however, health must be disregarded when it is the only thing a person can afford to eat. A study by the American Diabetes Association found that on average healthy diets cost $18.16 per thousand calories, while unhealthy diets only cost $1.76 per thousand calories (Parker-Pope). Based on a person who needs two thousand calories a day, it would cost roughly $1,089.60 a month for one person to eat a healthy diet when an unhealthy diet would cost $105.60 a month. This means that a person eating a nutritious diet would spend over ten times as much as a person eating a nutrient deficient diet. People
who earn minimum wage, especially those that have more than one person to support, cannot spend this much on food a month and are forced to instead buy unhealthier options and put themselves at a higher risk for obesity.

Influences such as the convenience of unhealthy food and advertisements may also impact the rates of obesity in low-income areas and populations. It is important that they are acknowledged as well before designing new policies or interventions, so that all possible causes and factors of obesity may be addressed. Unhealthy food, for example, fast food is almost always convenient and simple, as most foods come already cooked and ready to be eaten. While healthy food is usually raw and unprocessed, meaning it has to be prepared before being served. Cooking a proper meal can take an hour or more, and many working people do not have the time. Also, cooking requires a lot of knowledge about recipes and how to prepare raw food, as well as expensive resources like pots, pans, and knives. Fast food is quick and requires no prior knowledge about cooking food or any equipment, making it an easy choice for those who are poor or busy. Food advertisements may also influence people’s choices. Most food advertisements seen on TV are for fast food and show this food as extremely desirable and a good deal. This may affect people’s choices and make them more likely to buy fast food, as it is shown as delicious and within their budget. While these influences are unlikely to be the main cause of high rates of obesity for low-income people, it is still important that they are examined and thought of while interventions are being made.

With the obesity epidemic being so detrimental to individual’s health, people and government have been pushing for interventions and policies to help fight against obesity. Some interventions have helped bring fruits and vegetables to low-income families and neighborhoods. Food pantries have been vitally important to providing food in food deserts. Saul Orduna, another resident of East Portland, lives in a food desert and gets about half to two-thirds of his groceries from the SUN food pantry. They provide him and his two children with fresh fruits and vegetables as well as milk, eggs, and bread. It is an important service for his family, as he only has $380 a month for food (Peacher). Services like this help bring food to those who cannot afford or access it, however, they are not a good long-term solution to food insecurity. Other policies and interventions have been suggested that are likely to have more negative effects. The
taxation of junk food, particularly high-calorie beverages, has been proposed to
discourage people from purchasing unhealthy foods and hopefully lower obesity rates
(Drewnowski 265S). Taxing unhealthy foods might be a good incentive for middle and
high income people to buy healthier food. However, without lowering the price of
nutritional food, policies like this will only put more of an economic burden on low-
income people and make it harder for them to get any food at all.

New policies and interventions are needed, and it is necessary that they address
the many different influences on the rates of obesity, including access, price, and
advertising. Tax subsidies implemented on healthy foods, such as unprocessed meats,
fruits, and vegetables, would encourage people to buy that instead of other options. It is
important that if tax subsidies are put on healthy food that it is advertised to the public.
Advertising on TV and in stores could be used alongside tax subsidies to promote the
newly affordable, healthy choices and make them seem more desirable. Putting healthy
foods in the front of stores so that they are the first thing people see, rather than
unhealthier options like chips and candy, would also help people choose more nutritious
foods over other choices. These may seem like small changes; however, they could
have a huge impact.

Education may also play an important part in lowering rates of obesity. Nutrition
is extremely complicated, and there are some who may have never learned what is
healthy and what is not. Others may know what is healthy, yet they do not know how to
prepare and use such foods. Free community education classes could be used to teach
people about health and nutrition. Along with cooking classes to teach people how to
properly prepare and cook vegetables and fruits. Both of these classes would help
inform people about their own health and build their confidence in choosing and
preparing food. Classes may also be helpful for teaching skills other than nutrition and
cooking. In an interview with the researcher Steven Cummins, he stated that “We have
to think very carefully about giving people the skills to make better decisions when
they’re in stores, as well as providing access to the stores in the first place” (Corapi). He
brings up an important point about the importance of teaching people how to manage
their money properly and how to find good deals on healthy food. A class teaching
these kinds of skills could help people be more organized and deliberate in what they buy.

The obesity epidemic in low-income populations is a complex problem that has been going on for a long time. The answer sadly is not simple and is going to require involvement from the government, stores, and the communities of America. Until people are able to afford and access food themselves, it is important that people continue to support food banks and pantries, like the Oregon Food Bank, as they provide vital assistance to those who are food-insecure. Solving the problem of obesity in impoverished areas is going to be complicated, however, the result will have more people with equal access to nutritious, healthy food and lower rates of obesity.

Works Cited
Student Veterans and Their Struggle with Higher Education\textsuperscript{134}

Did you know that student veterans are one of the largest and most diverse subcultures to matriculate into higher education in America? Ever since the inception of the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill, the enrollment of service members post-military-service has skyrocketed. “Institutions have not faced such a significant influx of veteran students on campus since World War II” (Cook iii). Although they receive years of extensive training in military service, the skills that vets have learned are generally not immediately transferrable into civilian employment. With an abysmal job market, most service members are forced into higher education to obtain employment. The passage of the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill was the most significant increase in education benefits for service members and veterans since the original G.I. Bill of 1944; however, recent data from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) shows that only a small percentage of veterans use all of their federal education benefits (Lighthall 81). According to American College Testing (ACT), in the United States approximately one in four freshmen do not return after their first year and almost half will not graduate—but the statistic is significantly worse for veterans (Cass 23). Billions of dollars are lost annually on freshman attrition and wasted G.I. Bill benefits (Ibid.). Why do so many service members struggle to succeed during their transition into higher education? The answer may vary from veteran to veteran, but they underlying theme is an inability to successfully transition from a highly structured military lifestyle into a self-sustaining civilian one.

One major challenge faced by veterans is social reintegration after war. The well-known saying “War changes people” is profoundly true. Although not all vets see combat, it cannot be denied that the experience of battle is physically, emotionally, and spiritually damaging. Other students who have not served can never truly understand this. The people—students and faculty—have no understanding of what student
veterans have been through, causing a feeling of alienation (Lighthall 84). Universities have long been a place where young people develop a purpose in life and make friends, but for many veterans, it can have the opposite effect. In “Lonely Men on Campus: Student Veterans Struggle to Fit In,” Alex Horton writes a case study on a combat veteran struggling from this difficulty with social integration. He explains Josh Martell’s experience: “He has quarantined himself almost entirely. He shows up for class, takes notes, and leaves, most of the time without communicating with students or professors” (Horton). Josh isolated himself, never saying “more than a few words to anyone” (Ibid.). This behavior is not abnormal: it is a reaction many veterans exhibit when they go to college. Horton explains how this reclusive behavior betrays the man Josh really is, explaining that he has transformed into an introvert. For many veterans, the feeling of being different or not relating to other students creates a feeling of isolation (Cass 29). Alienation from the student body certainly contributes to veteran attrition.

Coupled with this feeling of isolation, college campuses can have a drastic culture shock for veterans. During their years spent in the military, people in the service are inextricably tied to some sort of social system, and solitude is rare or even absent altogether. In “Ten Things You Should Know about Today’s Student Veteran,” Alison Lighthall explains how the many vets lose friends upon leaving the military, as well as a sense of purpose, identity, and structure. This can push anyone to their limit. Lighthall goes on to say that the unfamiliar social system of the university has no resemblance to the military. Classes and assignments might have less structure or looser expectations. They might require more self-management of time rather than following a strict schedule.

For myself, being a student veteran, I have faced many of these same struggles during my transition into higher education. I purposefully never solicit that I am a veteran unless I need to. It’s not that I’m not proud of it, or even that I am ashamed of anything I have done; it’s because I don’t want to feel any more singled out than I already do. I also find that people either have strong feelings against the military or simply have no understanding of what myself or other veterans have gone through. I try to avoid hearing questions like, “Did you know anyone who died?” or, “Have you killed anyone?” After spending years always surrounded by military personnel and within a unique
culture, it is very difficult to relate to and want to be around college students. Like Josh, I find myself wanting to be alone rather than attempt to connect with my classmates.

Another major barrier for student veterans are the physical and mental health challenges that might have resulted from their service. This is another place where the vast majority of Americans who choose not to join the military do not have the context to understand the experience. Witnessing your best friend get blown apart or shot is a massive shock and emotionally devastating. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) haunts many of today’s student veterans and further hinders their education. This is not to mention the risk of physical disability that veterans take when they enroll in service. Because of anxiety or injury related disorders, some veterans may show up to class late or even miss class. Other may show up early to orient themselves in a seat that has a full view of the classroom to reduce the sense of a physical threat (Lighthall 88). During class, they may have trouble staying focused or have difficulty composing themselves. They may struggle to process the information or skills being taught (Ibid. 85). Teachers should be aware of these challenges and support veterans in their learning and access needs.

Many veterans that suffer from PTSD go undiagnosed and attempt to live, work, and go to school without seeking aid (Cook 8-9). The mentality instilled in them is to not be a victim, and many student veterans fight PTSD without any assistance. Because of the stigma around PTSD and a veteran’s desire to be self-sufficient, a student veteran might not seek help from Disability Services, the tutoring centers, or other on-campus resources.

Universities may be logistically suited to help veterans return to civilian life; however, the disconnected social experience, age discrepancies, and unique challenges make it difficult for them to seek help. Faculty and university officials are beginning to understand this issue as the veteran population steadily rises, but it may not be fast enough to help current student veterans. Helping this diverse subculture in today’s universities starts first with awareness and an understanding of their needs. Educators should reach out to them with compassion and respect, accommodate their individual learning needs, and most importantly, see them as unique people who chose to serve our country and endured burdens beyond anything we could imagine. It could
make all the difference to that student veteran. It might even mean the difference between finding success in life, or ending up lost, jobless, and homeless.

Works Cited
“Our Town” from This American Life
An inquiry-driven exploration of the effects of immigration on Albertville, Alabama. Listen to Part One of “Our Town” and Part Two of “Our Town” online.

“The Unfinished Battle in the Capital of the Confederacy” from Code Switch
A research-based investigation into the legacy of the confederacy, including monuments built in tribute 50 years after the Civil War. Listen to the podcast here.

See pages 90-91 of Nickel and Dimed, book by Barbara Ehrenreich. Excerpt: Self-restraint becomes more of a challenge when the owner of a million-dollar condo … takes me into the master bathroom to explain the difficulties she’s been having with the shower stall. Seems its marble walls have been “bleeding” onto the brass fixtures, and can I scrub the grouting extra hard? That’s not your marble bleeding, I want to tell her, it’s the worldwide working class—the people who quarried the marble, wove your Persian rugs until they went blind, harvested the apples in your lovely fall-themed dining room centerpiece, smelted the steel for the nails, drove the trucks, put up this building, and now bend and squat to clean it.

Not that I … imagine that I am a member of that oppressed working class. My very ability to work tirelessly hour after hour is a product of decades of better-than-average medical care, a high-protein diet, and workouts in gyms that charge $400 or $500 a year. … But I will say this for myself: I have never employed a cleaning person or service.… [M]ostly I rejected the idea … because this is just not the kind of relationship I want to have with another human being. (In 1999, somewhere between 14 and 18 percent of households employed an outsider to do the cleaning and the numbers are rising dramatically. Mediamark research reports a 53 percent increase, between 1995 and 1999, in the number of households using a hired cleaner or service once a month or more….)}
Gaycation
(TV series by Ellen Page)

Watch this investigatory TV series online: VICELAND usually has at least one episode that you can stream for free, or you can stream it for $1.99/episode on YouTube, iTunes, Amazon, or Google Play.

Sweet Crude
(Documentary - ISBN: 9780781513449)

Watch the Sweet Crude trailer. Find this documentary through your school's library via WorldCat [Sweet Crude], or order it online.

Why Boston’s Hospitals Were Ready
(New Yorker article, informed by research)

Read the article on The New Yorker's website: Why Boston’s Hospitals Were Ready [New Yorker article].

Additional Readings Endnotes


129 Essay by Cassidy Richardson, Portland State University, 2017. Reproduced with permission from the student author.


133 Essay by Catherine Sterrett, Portland Community College, 2017. Reproduced with permission from the student author.


135 Ehrenreich 90-91.

Appendix A

Concepts and Strategies for Revision

Let’s start with a few definitions. What is an *essay*? It’s likely that your teachers have been asking you to write essays for years now; you’ve probably formed some idea of the genre. But when I ask my students to define this kind of writing, their answers vary widely and only get at part of the meaning of “essay.”

Although we typically talk of an *essay* (noun), I find it instructive to think about essay (verb): to try; to test; to explore; to attempt to understand. An *essay* (noun), then, is an attempt and an exploration. Popularized shortly before the Enlightenment Era by Michel de Montaigne, the essay form was invested in the notion that writing invites discovery: the idea was that he, as a lay-person without formal education in a specific discipline, would learn more about a subject through the act of writing itself.

What difference does this new definition make for us, as writers?

- **Writing invites discovery.** Throughout the act of writing, you will learn more about your topic. Even though some people think of writing as a way to capture a fully-formed idea, writing can also be a way to process through ideas: in other words, writing can be an act of thinking. It forces you to look closer and see more. Your revisions should reflect the knowledge you gain through the act of writing.

- **An essay is an attempt, but not all attempts are successful on the first try.** You should give yourself license to fail, to an extent. If to essay is to try, then it’s okay to fall short. Writing is also an iterative process, which means your first draft isn’t the final product.

Now, what is *revision*? You may have been taught that revision means fixing commas, using a thesaurus to brighten up word choice, and maybe tweaking a sentence or two. However, I prefer to think of revision as “re | vision.”
Revision isn’t just about polishing—it’s about seeing your piece from a new angle, with “fresh eyes.” Often, we get so close to our own writing that we need to be able to see it from a different perspective in order to improve it. Revision happens on many levels. What you may have been trained to think of as revision—grammatical and mechanical fixes—is just one tier. Here’s how I like to imagine it:

Even though all kinds of revision are valuable, your global issues are first-order concerns, and proofreading is a last-order concern. If your entire topic, approach, or structure needs revision, it doesn’t matter if you have a comma splice or two. It’s likely that you’ll end up rewriting that sentence anyway.
There are a handful of techniques you can experiment with in order to practice true revision. First, if you can, take some time away from your writing. When you return, you will have a clearer head. You will even, in some ways, be a different person when you come back—since we as humans are constantly changing from moment to moment, day to day, you will have a different perspective with some time away. This might be one way for you to make procrastination work in your favor: if you know you struggle with procrastination, try to bust out a quick first draft the day an essay is assigned. Then, you can come back to it a few hours or a few days later with fresh eyes and a clearer idea of your goals.

Second, you can challenge yourself to reimagine your writing using global and local revision techniques, like those included later in this appendix.

Third, you can (and should) read your paper aloud, if only to yourself. This technique distances you from your writing; by forcing yourself you read aloud, you may catch sticky spots, mechanical errors, abrupt transitions, and other mistakes you would miss if you were immersed in your writing. (Recently, a student shared with me that she uses an online text-to-speech voice reader to create this same separation. By listening along and taking notes, she can identify opportunities for local- and proofreading-level revision.)

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, you should rely on your learning community. Because you most likely work on tight deadlines and don’t always have the opportunity to take time away from our projects, you should solicit feedback from your classmates, the Writing Center, your instructor, your Peer Workshop group, or your friends and family. As readers, they have valuable insight to the rhetorical efficacy of your writing: their feedback can be useful in developing a piece which is conscious of audience. To begin setting expectations and procedures for your Peer Workshop, turn to the first activity in this section.

Throughout this text, I have emphasized that good writing cannot exist in a vacuum; similarly, good rewriting often requires a supportive learning community. Even if you have had negative experiences with peer workshops before, I encourage you to give them another chance. Not only do professional writers consistently work with other writers, but my students are nearly always surprised by just how helpful it is to work alongside their classmates.

The previous diagram (of global, local, and proofreading levels of revision) reminds us that everyone has something valuable to offer in a learning community: because there are so many different elements on which to articulate feedback, you can provide meaningful feedback to your workshop, even if you don’t feel like an expert writer.
During the many iterations of revising, remember to be flexible and to listen. Seeing your writing with fresh eyes requires you to step outside of yourself, figuratively. Listen actively and seek to truly understand feedback by asking clarifying questions and asking for examples. The reactions of your audience are a part of writing that you cannot overlook, so revision ought to be driven by the responses of your colleagues.

On the other hand, remember that the ultimate choice to use or disregard feedback is at the author’s discretion: provide all the suggestions you want as a group member, but use your best judgment as an author. If members of your group disagree—great! Contradictory feedback reminds us that writing is a dynamic, transactional action which is dependent on the specific rhetorical audience.

### Chapter Vocabulary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Essay</strong></td>
<td>a medium, typically nonfiction, by which an author can achieve a variety of purposes. Popularized by Michel de Montaigne as a method of discovery of knowledge: in the original French, “essay” is a verb that means “to try; to test; to explore; to attempt to understand.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fluff</strong></td>
<td>uneconomical writing: filler language or unnecessarily wordy phrasing. Although fluff occurs in a variety of ways, it can be generally defined as words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs that do not work hard to help you achieve your rhetorical purpose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Iterative</strong></td>
<td>literally, a repetition within a process. The writing process is iterative because it is non-linear and because an author often has to repeat, revisit, or reapproach different steps along the way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>learning community</strong></td>
<td>a network of learners and teachers, each equipped and empowered to provide support through horizontal power relations. Values diversity insofar as it encourages growth and perspective, but also inclusivity. Also, a community that learns by adapting to its unique needs and advantages.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Revision

the iterative process of changing a piece of writing. Literally, re-vision: seeing your writing with “fresh eyes” in order to improve it. Includes changes on Global, Local, and Proofreading levels. Changes might include:

- rewriting (trying again, perhaps from a different angle or with a different focus)
- adding (new information, new ideas, new evidence)
- subtracting (unrelated ideas, redundant information, fluff)
- rearranging (finding more effective vectors or sequences of organization)
- switching out (changing words or phrases, substituting different evidence)

mechanical clean-up (standardizing punctuation, grammar, or formatting)
Revision Activities

Establishing Your Peer Workshop

Before you begin working with a group, it’s important for you to establish a set of shared goals, expectations, and processes. You might spend a few minutes talking through the following questions:

- Have you ever participated in a Peer Workshop before? What worked? What didn’t?
- What do you hate about group projects? How might you mitigate these issues?
- What opportunities do group projects offer that working independently doesn’t? What are you excited for?
- What requests do you have for your Peer Workshop group members?

In addition to thinking through the culture you want to create for your workshop group, you should also consider the kind of feedback you want to exchange, practically speaking. In order to arrive at a shared definition for “good feedback,” I often ask my students to complete the following sentence as many times as possible with their groupmates: “Good feedback is...”

The list could go on forever, but here a few that I emphasize:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Good feedback is...”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>actionable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not prescriptive (offers suggestions, not demands)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cognizant of process (i.e., recognizes that a first draft isn’t a final draft)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>respectful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>honest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>specific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comprehensive (i.e., global, local, and proofreading)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attentive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once you’ve discussed the parameters for the learning community you’re building, you can begin workshopping your drafts, asking, “What does the author do well and what could they do better?” Personally, I prefer a workshop that’s conversational, allowing the author and the audience to discuss the work both generally and specifically; however, your group should use whatever format will be most valuable for you. Before starting your workshop, try to get everyone on the same page logistically by using the flowchart on the following two pages.
Establishing Your Peer Workshop

To set the tone and expectations for your unique workshop group, talk through the following prompts. Record your answers on the companion sheet. Part One asks you to establish a climate or culture for your group; Part Two will help you talk through logistics.

(1) Culture of your Workshop

(a.) Choose the 3-5 descriptors of good feedback that are most important to the members of your group.

(b.) Discuss for 3-5 minutes: What do each of you need for this Peer Workshop to be effective?

FROM EACH OTHER? FROM THE INSTRUCTOR? FROM YOURSELVES? FROM YOUR ENVIRONMENT?

Record responses on a separate sheet of paper.

(2) Procedures for your Workshop

How will you read each draft?

- We will read drafts one at a time.
  - Out loud.
  - On our own.
  - We will exchange feedback after reading each draft.

- We will read all the drafts independently before exchanging feedback.
  - We will each take a copy of all the drafts and work independently until we are finished.
  - We will rotate one copy of each draft so everyone's annotations are on the same copy.
  - We will exchange feedback after we've reviewed everything, at the end.
Appendix A: Concepts and Strategies for Revision

How will your group develop feedback?

- We will provide verbal feedback in discussion.
- We will share both written and verbal feedback.
- We will write down our feedback.

Will anyone take notes during discussion? Who?
- We will write all our feedback on each other’s drafts.
  Annotation (Local & Proofreading) and notes (Global)
- We will use graphic organizers provided by the instructor.
- We will both annotate and use graphic organizers.

How will you exchange your feedback?

- We will discuss during class.
- We will give back our notes and answer questions as necessary.
- We will meet up in person outside of class.
- We will share digitally.

What if you run out of time?

- Via school-based email.
- Via Google Docs/Drive.
- Via Skype, Google Hangouts, etc.
Global Revision Activity for a Narrative Essay

This assignment challenges you to try new approaches to a draft you’ve already written. Although you will be “rewriting” in this exercise, you are not abandoning your earlier draft: this exercise is generative, meaning it is designed to help you produce new details, ideas, or surprising bits of language that you might integrate into your project.

First, choose a part of your draft that (a) you really like but think could be better, or (b) just isn’t working for you. This excerpt should be no fewer than 100 words and can include your entire essay, if you want.

Then, complete your choice of one prompt from the list below: apply the instruction to the excerpt to create new content. Read over your original once, but do not refer back to it after you start writing. Your goal here is to deviate from the first version, not reproduce it. The idea here is to produce something new about your topic through constraint; you are reimagining your excerpt on a global scale.

After completing one prompt, go back to the original and try at least one more, or apply a different prompt to your new work.

1. Change genres: For example, if your excerpt is written in typical essay form, try writing it as poetry, or dialogue from a play/movie, or a radio advertisement.
2. Zoom in: Focus on one image, color, idea, or word from your excerpt and zoom way in. Meditate on this one thing with as much detail as possible.
3. Zoom out: Step back from the excerpt and contextualize it with background information, concurrent events, information about relationship or feelings.
4. Change point-of-view: Try a new vantage point for your story by changing pronouns and perspective. For instance, if your excerpt is in first-person (I/me), switch to second- (you) or third-person (he/she/they).
5. Change setting: Resituate your excerpt in a different place, or time.
6. Change your audience: Rewrite the excerpt anticipating the expectations of a different reader than you first intended. For example, if the original excerpt is in the same speaking voice you would use with your friends, write as if your strictest teacher or the president or your grandmother is reading it. If you’ve written in an “academic” voice, try writing for your closest friend—use slang, swear words, casual language, whatever.
7. Add another voice: Instead of just the speaker of the essay narrating, add a listener. This listener can agree, disagree, question, heckle, sympathize, apologize, or respond in any other way you can imagine. (See “the nay-sayer’s voice” in Chapter Nine.)
8. Change timeline (narrative sequence): Instead of moving chronologically forward, rearrange the events to bounce around.
9. Change tense: Narrate from a different vantage point by changing the grammar. For example, instead of writing in past tense, write in present or future tense.
10. Change tone: Reimagine your writing in a different emotional register. For instance, if your writing is predominantly nostalgic, try a bitter tone. If you seem regretful, try to write as if you were proud.

**Reverse Outlining**

Have you ever written an outline before writing a draft? It can be a useful pre-writing strategy, but it doesn’t work for all writers. If you’re like me, you prefer to brain-dump a bunch of ideas on the paper, then come back to organize and refocus during the revision process. One strategy that can help you here is reverse outlining.

Divide a blank piece of paper into three columns, as demonstrated below. Number each paragraph of your draft, and write an equal numbered list down the left column of your blank piece of paper. Write “Idea” at the top of the middle column and “Purpose” at the top of the right column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>¶</th>
<th>Idea (What is the ¶ saying?)</th>
<th>Purpose (What is the ¶ doing?)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now, wade back through your essay, identifying what each paragraph is saying and what each paragraph is doing. Choose a few key words or phrases for each column to record on your sheet of paper.

- Try to use consistent language throughout the reverse outline so you can see where your paragraphs are saying or doing similar things.
- A paragraph might have too many different ideas or too many different functions for you to concisely identify. This could be a sign that you need to divide that paragraph up.

Here’s a student’s model reverse outline:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>¶</th>
<th>Idea (What is the ¶ saying?)</th>
<th>Purpose (What is the ¶ doing?)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>concept</td>
<td>support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Theatre is an important part of education and childhood development</td>
<td>Setting up and providing thesis statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>There have been many changes in recent history to public education in the United States</td>
<td>Providing context for thesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Theatre programs in public schools have been on the decline over the past two decades</td>
<td>Providing context and giving urgency to the topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>a) Theatre has social/emotional benefits b) Theatre has academic benefits</td>
<td>Supporting and explaining thesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>a) Acknowledge argument in favor of standardized testing b) STEAM curriculum incorporates arts education into other academic subjects</td>
<td>Disarming audience, proposing a solution to underfunded arts programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Socioeconomic inequality is also an obstacle to theatre education</td>
<td>Acknowledging broader scope of topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Looking forward at public education reform, we should incorporate theatre into public education</td>
<td>Call to action, backing up and restating thesis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

But wait—there’s more!

Once you have identified the idea(s) and purpose(s) of each paragraph, you can start revising according to your observations. From the completed reverse outline, create a new outline with a different sequence, organization, focus, or balance. You can reorganize by

- combining or dividing paragraphs,
- re-arranging ideas, and
- adding or subtracting content.

Reverse outlining can also be helpful in identifying gaps and redundancies: now that you have a new outline, do any of your ideas seem too brief? Do you need more evidence for a certain argument? Do you see ideas repeated more than necessary?

After completing the reverse outline above, the student proposed this new organization:

Proposed changes based on reverse outline:
You might note that this strategy can also be applied on the sentence and section level. Additionally, if you are a kinesthetic or visual learner, you might cut your paper into smaller pieces that you can physically manipulate.

Be sure to read aloud after reverse outlining to look for abrupt transitions.

You can see a simplified version of this technique demonstrated in this video.

**Local Revision Activity: Cutting Fluff**

When it’s late at night, the deadline is approaching, and we’ve simply run out of things to say... we turn to **fluff**. Fluff refers to language which doesn’t do work for you—language that simply takes up space or sits flat on the page, rather than working economically and impactfully. Whether or not you’ve used it deliberately, all authors have been guilty of fluffy writing at one time or another.

[Example of fluff on social media](“Presidents don’t have to be smart” from funnyjunk.com).

Fluff happens for a lot of reasons.

- Of course, reaching a word- or page-count is the most common motivation.
- Introductions and conclusions are often fluffy because the author can’t find a way into or out of the subject, or because the author doesn’t know what their exact subject will be.
- Sometimes, the presence of fluff is an indication that the author doesn’t know enough about the subject or that their scope is too broad.
- Other times, fluffy language is deployed in an effort to sound “smarter” or “fancier” or “more academic”—which is an understandable pitfall for developing writers.

These circumstances, plus others, encourage us to use language that’s not as effective, authentic, or economical. Fluff happens in a lot of ways; here are a few I’ve noticed:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Thesaurus Syndrome</strong></th>
<th>A writer uses inappropriately complex language (often because of the right-click → Synonyms function) to achieve a different tone. The more complex language might be used inaccurately or sound inauthentic because the author isn’t as familiar with it.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Roundabout phrasing</strong></td>
<td>Rather than making a direct statement (“That man is a fool.”), the author uses couching language or beats around the bush (“If one takes into account each event, each decision, it would not be unwise for one to suggest that that man’s behaviors are what some would call foolish.”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Abstraction or generalities</strong></td>
<td>If the author hasn’t quite figured out what they want to say or has a too broad of a scope, they might discuss an issue very generally without committing to specific, engaging details.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Digression</strong></td>
<td>An author might get off topic, accidentally or deliberately, creating extraneous, irrelevant, or unconnected language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ornamentation or flowery language</strong></td>
<td>Similarly to Thesaurus Syndrome, often referred to as “purple prose,” an author might choose words that sound pretty or smart, but aren’t necessarily the right words for their ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wordy sentences</strong></td>
<td>Even if the sentences an author creates are grammatically correct, they might be wordier than necessary.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of course, there’s a very fine line between detail and fluff. Avoiding fluff doesn’t mean always using the fewest words possible. Instead, you should occasionally ask yourself in the revision process, *How is this part contributing to the whole? Is this somehow building toward a bigger purpose?* If the answer is no, then you need to revise.

The goal should not necessarily be “Don’t write fluff,” but rather “Learn to get rid of fluff in revision.” In light of our focus on process, you are allowed to write fluff in the drafting period, so long as you learn to “prune” during revisions. (I use the word “prune” as an analogy for caring for a plant: just as you must cut the dead leaves off for the plant’s health and growth, you will need to cut fluff so your writing can thrive.)
Here are a few strategies:

- Read out loud,
- Ask yourself what a sentence is doing, rhetorically,
- Combine like sentences, phrases, or ideas,
- Use signposts, like topic-transition sentences (for yourself during revision and for your reader in the final draft), and
- Be specific—stay cognizant of your scope (globally) and the detail of your writing (locally).

To practice revising for fluff, workshop the following excerpt by yourself or with a partner. Your goal is not to cut back to the smallest number of words, but rather to prune out what you consider to be fluff and leave what you consider to be detail. You should be able to explain the choices you make.

There was a time long before today when an event occurred involving a young woman who was known to the world as Goldilocks. On the particular day at hand, Goldilocks made a spontaneous decision to wander through the forest, the trees growing up high above her flowing blonde pigtails. Some time after she commenced her voyage, but not after too long, she saw sitting on the horizon a small residency. Goldilocks rapped her knuckles on the door, but alas, no one answered the door. Therefore, Goldilocks decided that it would be a good idea to enter the unattended house, so she entered it.

Atop the average-sized table in the kitchen of the house, there were three bowls of porridge, which is similar to oatmeal. Porridge is a very common dish in Europe; in fact, the Queen of England is well-known for enjoying at least one daily bowl of porridge per day. Goldilocks, not unlike the Queen of England, enjoys eating porridge for its nutritional value. On this day, she was feeling quite hungry and wanted to eat. She decided that she should taste one of the three bowls of porridge, from which steam was rising indicating its temperature. But, because she apparently couldn’t tell, she imbibed a spoonful of the porridge and vocalized the fact that the porridge was of too high a temperature for her to masticate and consume: “This porridge is too hot!

Appended A Endnotes

Complete citations are included at the end of the book.

Ibid.
Appendix B
Engaged Reading Strategies

There are a lot of ways to become a better writer, but the best way I know is to read a lot. Why? Not only does attentive reading help you understand grammar and mechanics more intuitively, but it also allows you to develop your personal voice and critical worldviews more deliberately. By encountering a diversity of styles, voices, and perspectives, you are likely to identify the ideas and techniques that resonate with you; while your voice is distinctly yours, it is also a unique synthesis of all the other voices you’ve been exposed to.

But it is important to acknowledge that the way we read matters. At some point in your academic career, you’ve probably encountered the terms “active reading” or “critical reading.” But what exactly does active reading entail?

It begins with an acknowledgment that reading, like writing, is a process: active reading is complex, iterative, and recursive, consisting of a variety of different cognitive actions. Furthermore, we must recognize that the reading process can be approached many different ways, based on our backgrounds, strengths, and purposes.

However, many people don’t realize that there’s more than one way to read; our early training as readers fosters a very narrow vision of critical literacy. For many generations in many cultures across the world, developing reading ability has generally trended toward efficiency and comprehension of main ideas. Your family, teachers, and other folks who taught you to read trained you to read in particular ways. Most often, novice readers are encouraged to ignore detail and nuance in the name of focus: details are distracting. Those readers also tend to project their assumptions on a text. This practice, while useful for global understanding of a text, is only one way to approach reading; by itself, it does not constitute “engaged reading.”

In her landmark article on close reading, Jane Gallop explains that ignoring details while reading is effective, but also problematic:

When the reader concentrates on the familiar, she is reassured that what she already knows is sufficient in relation to this new book. Focusing on the surprising, on the other hand, would mean giving up the comfort of the familiar, of the already known for the sake of learning, of encountering something new, something she didn’t already know.
In fact, this all has to do with learning. Learning is very difficult; it takes a lot of effort. It is of course much easier if once we learn something we can apply what we have learned again and again. It is much more difficult if every time we confront something new, we have to learn something new.

Reading what one expects to find means finding what one already knows. Learning, on the other hand, means coming to know something one did not know before. Projecting is the opposite of learning. As long as we project onto a text, we cannot learn from it, we can only find what we already know. Close reading is thus a technique to make us learn, to make us see what we don’t already know, rather than transforming the new into the old.\textsuperscript{138}

To be engaged readers, we must avoid projecting our preconceived notions onto a text. To achieve deep, complex understanding, we must consciously attend to a text using a variety of strategies.

The following strategies are implemented by all kinds of critical readers; some readers even use a combination of these strategies. Like the writing process, though, active reading looks different for everyone. These strategies work really well for some people, but not for others: I encourage you to experiment with them, as well as others not covered here, to figure out what your ideal critical reading process looks like.

### Chapter Vocabulary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>annotation</td>
<td>engaged reading strategy by which a reader marks up a text with their notes, questions, new vocabulary, ideas, and emphases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>critical/active reading</td>
<td>also referred to in this text as engaged reading, a set of strategies and concepts to interrupt projection and focus on a text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SQ3R</td>
<td>an engaged reading strategy to improve comprehension and interrupt projection. <strong>Survey</strong>, <strong>Question</strong>, <strong>Read</strong>, <strong>Recite</strong>, <strong>Review</strong>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annotation

Annotation is the most common and one of the most useful engaged reading strategies. You might know it better as “marking up” a text. Annotating a reading is visual evidence to your teacher that you read something—but more importantly, it allows you to focus on the text itself by asking questions and making notes to yourself to spark your memory later.

Take a look at the sample annotation on the next page. Note that the reader here is doing several different things:

- **Underlining important words, phrases, and sentences.**
  Many studies have shown that underlining or highlighting alone does not improve comprehension or recall; however, limited underlining can draw your eye back to curious phrases as you re-read, discuss, or analyze a text.

- **Writing marginal notes.**
  Even though you can’t fit complex ideas in the margins, you can:
  - use keywords to spark your memory,
  - track your reactions,
  - remind yourself where an important argument is,
  - define unfamiliar words,
  - draw illustrations to think through an image or idea visually, or
  - make connections to other texts.

In addition to taking notes directly on the text itself, you might also write a brief summary with any white space left on the page. As we learned in Chapter Two, summarizing will help you process information, ensure that you understand what you’ve read, and make choices about which elements of the text to focus on.

For a more guided process for annotating an argument, follow these steps from Brian Gazaille, a teacher at University of Oregon:

Most “kits” that you find in novelty stores give you materials and instructions about how to construct an object: a model plane, a bicycle, a dollhouse. This kit asks you to deconstruct one of our readings, identifying its thesis, breaking down its argument, and calling attention to the ways it supports its ideas. Dissecting a text is no easy task, and this assignment is designed to help you understand the logic and rhetoric behind what you just read.
Print out a clean copy of the text and annotate it as follows:

1. **With a black pen, underline the writer’s thesis.** If you think the thesis occurs over several sentences, underline all of them. If you think the text has an implicit (present but unstated) thesis, underline the section that comes closest to being the thesis and **rewrite** it as a thesis in the margins of the paper.

2. **With a different color pen, underline the “steps” of the argument.** In the margins of the paper, paraphrase those steps and say whether or not you agree with them. To figure out the steps of the argument, ask: What was the author’s thesis? What ideas did they need to talk about to support that thesis? Where and how does each paragraph discuss those ideas? Do you agree with those ideas?

3. **With a different color pen, put [brackets] around any key terms or difficult concepts that the author uses, and define those terms in the margins of the paper.**

4. **With a different color pen, describe the writer’s persona at the top of the first page.** What kind of person is “speaking” the essay? What kind of expertise do they have? What kind of vocabulary do they use? How do they treat their intended audiences, or what do they assume about you, the reader?

5. **Using a highlighter, identify any rhetorical appeals (logos, pathos, ethos).** In the margins, explain how the passage works as an appeal. Ask: What is the passage asking you to buy into? How does it prompt me to reason (logos), feel (pathos), or believe (ethos)?

6. **At the end of the text, and in any color pen, write any questions or comments or questions you have for the author.** What strikes you as interesting/odd/infuriating/insightful about the argument? Why? What do you think the author has yet to discuss, either unconsciously or purposely?

For a more guided process for annotating a short story or memoir, follow these steps from Brian Gazaille, a teacher at University of Oregon:

Most “kits” that you find in novelty stores give you materials and instructions about how to construct an object: a model plane, a bicycle, a dollhouse. This kit asks you to **deconstruct** one of our readings, identifying its thesis, breaking down its argument, and calling attention to the ways it supports its ideas. Dissecting a text is no easy task, and this assignment is designed to help you understand the logic and rhetoric behind what you just read.

Print out a clean copy of the text and annotate it as follows:

1. **In one color, chart the story’s plot.** Identify these elements in the margins of the text by writing the appropriate term next to the corresponding part[s] of the story. (Alternatively, draw a chart on a separate piece of paper.) Your plot chart must include the following terms: **exposition, rising action, crisis, climax, falling action, dénouement.**
2. At the top of the first page, identify the story’s point of view as fully as possible. (Who is telling the story? What kind of narration is given?) In the margins, identify any sections of text in which the narrator’s position/intrusion becomes significant.

3. Identify your story’s protagonist and highlight sections of text that supply character description or motivation, labeling them in the margins. In a different color, do the same for the antagonist(s) of the story.

4. Highlight (in a different color) sections of the text that describe the story’s setting. Remember, this can include place, time, weather, and atmosphere. Briefly discuss the significance of the setting, where appropriate.

5. With a different color, identify key uses of figurative language—metaphors, similes, and personifications—by [bracketing] that section of text and writing the appropriate term.

6. In the margins, identify two distinctive lexicons (“word themes” or kinds of vocabulary) at work in your story. Highlight (with new colors) instances of those lexicons.

7. Annotate the story with any comments or questions you have. What strikes you as interesting? Odd? Why? What makes you want to talk back? Does any part of the text remind you of something else you’ve read or seen? Why?

**SQ3R**

This is far and away the most underrated engaged reading strategy I know: the few students I’ve had who know about it swear by it.

The SQ3R (or SQRRR) strategy has five steps:

**Before Reading:**

Survey (or Skim): Get a general idea of the text to prime your brain for new information. Look over the entire text, keeping an eye out for bolded terms, section headings, the “key” thesis or argument, and other elements that jump out at you. An efficient and effective way to skim is by looking at the first and last sentences of each paragraph.

**While Reading:**

Question: After a quick overview, bring yourself into curiosity mode by developing a few questions about the text. Developing questions is a good way to keep yourself engaged, and it will guide your reading as you proceed.

- What do you anticipate about the ideas contained in the text?
- What sort of biases or preoccupations do you think the text will reflect?
Read: Next, you should read the text closely and thoroughly, using other engaged reading strategies you’ve learned.
• Annotate the text: underline/highlight important passages and make notes to yourself in the margins.
• Record vocabulary words you don’t recognize.
• Pause every few paragraphs to check in with yourself and make sure you’re confident about what you just read.
• Take notes on a separate page as you see fit.

Recite: As you’re reading, take small breaks to talk to yourself aloud about the ideas and information you’re processing. I know this seems childish, but self-talk is actually really important and really effective. (It’s only as adolescents that we develop this aversion to talking to ourselves because it’s frowned upon socially.) If you feel uncomfortable talking to yourself, try to find a willing second party—a friend, roommate, classmate, significant other, family member, etc.—who will listen. If you have a classmate with the same reading assignment, practice this strategy collaboratively!

After Reading:

Review: When you’re finished reading, spend a few minutes “wading” back through the text: not diving back in and re-reading, but getting ankle-deep to refresh yourself. Reflect on the ideas the text considered, information that surprised you, the questions that remain unanswered or new questions you have, and the text’s potential use-value. The Cornell note-taking system recommends that you write a brief summary, but you can also free-write or talk through the main points that you remember. If you’re working with a classmate, try verbally summarizing.

Double-Column Notes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Notes &amp; Quotes</th>
<th>Questions &amp; Reactions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This note-taking strategy seems very simple at first pass, but will help keep you organized as you interact with a reading.

Divide a clean sheet of paper into two columns; on the left, make a heading for “Notes and Quotes,” and on the right, “Questions and Reactions.” As you read and re-read, jot down important ideas and words from the text on the left, and record your intellectual and emotional reactions on the right. Be sure to ask prodding questions of the text along the way, too!

By utilizing both columns, you are reminding yourself to stay close to the text (left side) while also evaluating how that text acts on you (right side). This method strengthens the connection you build with a reading.

**Increasing Reading Efficiency**

Although reading speed is not the most important part of reading, we often find ourselves with too much to read and too little time. Especially when you’re working on an inquiry-based research project, you’ll encounter more texts than you could possibly have time to read thoroughly. Here are a few quick tips:

**Encountering an Article in a Hurry:**

1. Some articles, especially scholarly articles, have abstracts. An abstract is typically an overview of the discussion, interests, and findings of an article; it’s a lot like a summary. Using the abstract, you can get a rough idea of the contents of an article and determine whether it’s worth reading more closely.
2. Some articles will have a conclusion set off at the end of the article. Often, these conclusions will summarize the text and its main priorities. You can read the conclusion before reading the rest of the article to see if its final destination is compatible with yours.
3. If you’re working on a computer with search-enabled article PDFs, webpages, or documents, use the “Find” function (Ctrl + F on a PC and ⌘ + F on a Mac) to locate keywords. It’s possible that you know what you’re looking for: use technology to get you there faster.

**Encountering a Book in a Hurry:**

Although print books are more difficult to speed-read, they are very valuable resources for a variety of reading and writing situations. To get a broad idea of a book’s contents, try the following steps:

1. Check the Table of Contents and the Index. At the front and back of the book, respectively, these resources provide more key terms, ideas, and topics that may or may not seem relevant to your study.
2. If you’ve found something of interest in the Table of Contents and/or Index, turn to the chapter/section of interest. Read the first paragraph, the (approximate) middle two to three paragraphs, and the last paragraph. Anything catch your eye? (If not, it may be worth moving on.)
3. If the book has an introduction, read it: many books will develop their focus and conceptual frameworks in this section, allowing you to determine whether the text will be valuable for your purposes.

4. Finally, check out "5 Ways to Read Faster That ACTUALLY Work - College Info Geek" [Video] that has both practical tips to increase reading speed and conceptual reminders about the learning opportunities that reading creates.

Appendix B Endnotes

Complete citations are included at the end of the book.

138 Gallop 11.
139 This activity was developed by Brian Gazaille, University of Oregon, 2018. Reproduced with permission of the author.
140 Ibid.
Appendix C: Metacognition

Glaciers are known for their magnificently slow movement. To the naked eye, they appear to be giant sheets of ice; however, when observed over long periods of time, we can tell that they are actually rivers made of ice.\textsuperscript{141}

Despite their pace, though, glaciers are immensely powerful. You couldn’t notice in the span of your own lifetime, but glaciers carve out deep valleys (like the one to the right) and grind the earth down to bedrock.\textsuperscript{142} Massive changes to the landscape and ecosystem take place over hundreds of thousands of years, making them difficult to observe from a human vantage point.

However, humans too are always changing, even within our brief lifetimes. No matter how stable our sense of self, we are constantly in a state of flux, perpetually changing as a result of our experiences and our context. Like with glaciers, we can observe change with the benefit of time; on the other hand, we might not perceive the specific ways in which we grow on a daily basis. When change is gradual, it is easy to overlook.

Particularly after challenging learning experiences, like those embraced by this textbook, it is crucial that you reflect on the impact those challenges had on your knowledge or skillsets, your worldviews, and your relationships.

Throughout your studies, I encourage you to occasionally pause to evaluate your progress, set new goals, and cement your recent learning. If nothing else, take 10 minutes once a month to free-write about where you were, where you are, and where you hope to be.

You may recognize some of these ideas from Chapter 3: indeed, what I’m talking about is the rhetorical gesture of reflection. Reflection is “looking back in order to look forward,” a way of peering back through time to draw insight from an experience that will support you (and your audience) as you move into the future.
I would like to apply this concept in a different context, though: instead of reflecting on an experience that you have narrated, as you may have in Section 1, you will reflect on the progress you’ve made as a critical consumer and producer of rhetoric through a metacognitive reflection.

Simply put, metacognition means “thinking about thinking.” For our purposes, though, metacognition means thinking about how thinking evolves. Reflection on your growth as a writer requires you to evaluate how your cognitive and rhetorical approaches have changed.

In this context, your metacognitive reflection can evaluate two distinct components of your learning:

- **Concepts that have impacted you**: New ideas or approaches to rhetoric or writing that have impacted the way you write, read, think, or understanding of the world.
  a) Ex: Radical Noticing, Inquiry-Based Research

- **Skills that have impacted you**: Specific actions or techniques you can apply to your writing, reading, thinking, or understanding of the world.
  a) Ex: Reverse Outlining, Imagery Inventory

Of course, because we are “looking back in order to look forward,” the concepts and skills that you identify should support a discussion of how those concepts and skills will impact your future with rhetoric, writing, the writing process, or thinking processes. Your progress to this point is important, but it should enable even more progress in the future.

### Chapter Vocabulary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>metacognition</td>
<td>literally, “thinking about thinking.” May also include how thinking evolves and reflection on growth.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Metacognitive Activities

There are a variety of ways to practice metacognition. The following activities will help you generate ideas for a metacognitive reflection. Additionally, though, a highly productive means of evaluating growth is to look back through work from earlier in your learning experience. Drafts, assignments, and notes documented your skills and understanding at a certain point in time, preserving an earlier version of you to contrast with your current position and abilities, like artifacts in a museum. In addition to the following activities, you should compare your current knowledge and skills to your previous efforts.

Writing Home from Camp
For this activity, you should write a letter to someone who is not affiliated with your learning community: a friend or family member who has nothing to do with your class or study of writing. Because they haven’t been in this course with you, imagine they don’t know anything about what we’ve studied.

Your purpose in the letter is to summarize your learning for an audience unfamiliar with the guiding concepts or skills encountered in your writing class. Try to boil down your class procedures, your own accomplishments, important ideas, memorable experiences, and so on.

Metacognitive Interview
With one or two partners, you will conduct an interview to generate ideas for your metacognitive reflection. You can also complete this activity independently, but there are a number of advantages to working collaboratively: your partner(s) may have ideas that you hadn’t thought of; you may find it easier to think out loud than on paper; and you will realize that many of your challenges have been shared.

During this exercise, one person should interview another, writing down answers while the interviewee speaks aloud. Although the interviewer can ask clarifying questions, the interviewee should talk most. For each question, the interviewee should speak for 1-2 minutes. Then, for after 1-2 minutes, switch roles and respond to the same question. Alternate the role of interviewer and interviewee for each question such that every member gets 1-2 minutes to respond while the other member(s) takes notes.
After completing all of the questions, independently free-write for five minutes. You can make note of recurring themes, identify surprising ideas, and fill in responses that you didn’t think of at the time.

- What accomplishments are you proud of from this term—in this class, another class, or your non-academic life?
- What activities, assignments, or experiences from this course have been most memorable for you? Most important?
- What has surprised you this term—in a good way or a bad way?
- Which people in your learning community have been most helpful, supportive, or respectful?
- Has your perspective on writing, research, revision, (self-)education, or critical thinking changed this term? How so?
- What advice would you give to the beginning-of-the-term version of yourself?
Model Texts by Student Authors

Model Metacognitive Reflection 1

I somehow ended up putting off taking this class until the very end of my college career. Thus, coming into it I figured that it would be a breeze because I’d already spent the past four years writing and refining my skills. What I quickly realized is that these skills have become extremely narrow; specifically focused in psychological research papers. Going through this class has truly equipped me with the skills to be a better, more organized, and more diverse writer.

I feel that the idea generation and revision exercises that we did were most beneficial to my growth as a writer. Generally, when I have a paper that I have to write, I anxiously attempt to come up with things that I could write about in my head. I also organize said ideas into papers in my head; rarely conceptualizing them on paper. Instead I just come up with an idea in my head, think about how I’m going to write it, then I sit down and dive straight into the writing. Taking the time to really generate various ideas and free write about them not only made me realize how much I have to write about, but also helped me to choose the best topic for the paper that I had to write. I’m sure that there have been many times in the past when I have simply written a paper on the first idea that came to my mind when I likely could have written a better paper on something else if I really took the time to flesh different ideas out.

Sharing my thoughts, ideas, and writings with my peers and with you have been a truly rewarding experience. I realized through this process that I frequently assume my ideas aren’t my comfort zone in this class and forced myself to present the ideas that I really wanted to talk about, even though I felt they weren’t all that interesting. What I came to experience is that people were really interested in what I had to say and the topics in which I chose to speak about were both important and interesting. This class has made me realize how truly vulnerable the writing process is.

This class has equipped me with the skills to listen to my head and my heart when it comes to what I want to write about, but to also take time to generate multiple ideas. Further, I have realized the important of both personal and peer revision in the
writing process. I’ve learned the importance of stepping away from a paper that you’ve been staring at for hours and that people generally admire vulnerability in writing.

Model Metacognitive Reflection

I entered class this term having written virtually nothing but short correspondence or technical documents for years. While I may have a decent grasp of grammar, reading anything I wrote was a slog. This class has helped me identify specific problems to improve my own writing and redefine writing as a worthwhile process and study tool rather than just a product. It has also helped me see ulterior motives of a piece of writing to better judge a source or see intended manipulation.

This focus on communication and revision over perfection was an awakening for me. As I’ve been writing structured documents for years, I’ve been focusing on structure and grammatical correctness over creating interesting content or brainstorming and exploring new ideas. Our class discussions and the article “Shitty First Drafts” have taught me that writing is a process, not a product. The act of putting pen to paper and letting ideas flow out has value in itself, and while those ideas can be organized later for a product they should first be allowed to wander and be played with.

Another technique I first encountered in this class was that of the annotated bibliography. Initially this seemed only like extra work that may prove useful to a reader or a grader. After diving further into my own research however, it was an invaluable reference to organize my sources and guide the research itself. Not only did it provide a paraphrased library of my research, it also shined light on patterns in my sources that I would not have noticed otherwise. I’ve already started keeping my own paraphrased notes along with sources in other classes, and storing my sources together to maintain a personal library.

People also say my writing is dry, but I could never pin down the problem they were driving at. This class was my first exposure to the terms logos, ethos, and pathos, and being able to name and identify different styles of argumentation helped me realize that I almost exclusively use logos in my own writing. Awareness of these styles let me contrast my own writing with how extensively used paths and ethos are in most
nonfiction writing found in books and news articles. I’ve noticed how providing example stories or posing questions can keep readers engaged while meaningfully introducing sources in the text, rather than as a parenthetical aside, improves the flow of writing and helps statements land with more authority.

As for narrative writing, I found the Global Revision Exercise for the first essay particularly interesting. To take a piece of writing and intentionally force a different voice or perspective on it showed how I can take improve a boring part of my paper by using a unique voice or style. This could be useful for expanding on reflective sections to evoke a particular feeling in the reader, or in conjunction with the Image Building Exercise to pull the reader into a specific moment.

This class was a requirement for me from which I didn’t expect to gain much. English classes I have taken in the past focused on formulaic writing and grammar or vague literary analysis, and I expected more of the same. Ultimately, I was pleasantly surprised by the techniques covered which are immediately applicable in other classes and more concrete analysis of rhetoric which made the vague ideas touched on before reach a more tangible clarity.

Appendix C Endnotes

Complete citations are included at the end of the book.

142 Ibid.
143 Essay by an anonymous student author, 2017. Reproduced with permission from the student author.
144 Essay by Benjamin Duncan, Portland State University, 2017. Reproduced with permission from the student author.
Additional Recommended Resources

- “Students' Right to Their Own Language” from NCTE’s Conference on College Composition and Communication
- “Revising Drafts” by the Writing Center at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
- “‘I need you to say “I”’: Why First Person Is Important in College Writing” by Kate McKinney Maddalena [essay]
- “Annoying Ways People Use Sources” by Kyle D. Stedman [essay]
- Your Logical Fallacy Is...
- “Shitty First Drafts” by Anne Lamott from Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life, Anchor, pp 21-27.
- “Argument as Emergence, Rhetoric as Love” by Jim W. Corder [JSTOR access]
- Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL)
  - Purdue OWL Home
  - Purdue OWL MLA Style & Citation
  - Purdue OWL APA Style & Citation
  - Purdue OWL Chicago/Turabian Style & Citation
- A Pocket Style Manual (7th edition, 2016), edited by Diana Hacker and Nancy Sommers [WorldCat]
• A Pocket Style Manual (7th edition, 2016), edited by Diana Hacker and Nancy Sommers [Amazon]

• North Carolina State University Citation Builder

• Citation Management Software - Overview Video

• Zotero

• Mendeley
Glossary

**Vocabulary**

**Analysis**
the cognitive process and/or rhetorical mode of studying constituent parts to demonstrate an interpretation of a larger whole.

**Annotated bibliography**
a research tool that organizes citations with a brief paragraph for each source examined.

**Annotation**
engaged reading strategy by which a reader marks up a text with their notes, questions, new vocabulary, ideas, and emphases.

**Argument**
a rhetorical mode in which different perspectives on a common issue are negotiated. See Aristotelian and Rogerian arguments.

**Aristotelian argument**
a mode of argument by which a writer attempts to convince their audience that one perspective is accurate.

**Audience**
the intended consumers for a piece of rhetoric. Every text has at least one audience; sometimes, that audience is directly addressed, and other times we have to infer.

**Authorial intent**
the inferred or speculated intention of a writer. Must be overlooked in the process of text wrestling analysis.

**Believer**
a posture from which to read; reader makes efforts to appreciate, understand, and agree with the text they encounter.

**Blockquote**
a direct quote of more than four lines which is reformatted according to stylistic guidelines.

**Bootstrapping**
the process of finding new sources using hyperlinked subject tags in the search results of a database.

**Call-to-action**
a persuasive writer’s directive to their audience; usually located toward the end of a text. Compare with purpose.

**Characterization**
the process by which an author builds characters; can be accomplished directly or indirectly.

**Citation mining**
the process of using a text’s citations, bibliography, or notes to track down other similar or related sources.

**Claim of evaluation**
an argument determining relative value (i.e., better, best, worse, worst). Requires informed judgment based on evidence and a consistent metric.

**Claim of phenomenon**
an argument exploring a measurable but arguable happening. Typically more straightforward than other claims, but should still be arguable and worth discussion.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Term</strong></th>
<th><strong>Definition</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>claim of policy</td>
<td>an argument that proposes a plan of action to address an issue. Articulates a stance that requires action, often informed by understanding of both phenomenon and evaluation. Often uses the word “should.” See call-to-action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>close reading</td>
<td>a technique of reading that focuses attention on features of the text to construct an interpretation. (This is in contrast to interpretive methods that rely on research, historical context, biography, or speculation.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>complaint tradition</td>
<td>the recurring social phenomenon in which a generation complains about the way things have changed since their earlier years. Coined by Leonard Greenbaum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confirmation bias</td>
<td>a cognitive bias by which a person seeks only ideas which confirm their existing worldview, thus convincing themselves that that worldview is universal and/or truthful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>connotation</td>
<td>the associated meanings of a word, phrase, or idea beyond its ‘dictionary’ definition; the complex, subjective, and dynamic meanings of a word, phrase, or idea the shift based on interpretive position. Contrast with denotation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>constraint-based writing</td>
<td>a writing technique by which an author tries to follow a rule or set of rules in order to create more experimental or surprising content, popularized by the Oulipo school of writers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRAAP Test</td>
<td>a technique for evaluating the credibility and use-value of a source; researcher considers the <strong>Currency</strong>, <strong>Relevance</strong>, <strong>Accuracy</strong>, <strong>Authority</strong>, and <strong>Purpose</strong> of the source to determine if it is trustworthy and useful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>credibility</td>
<td>the degree to which a text—its content, its author, and/or its publisher—is trustworthy and accurate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>critical/active reading</td>
<td>also referred to in this text as “engaged reading,” a set of strategies and concepts to interrupt projection and focus on a text. See Appendix B: Engaged Reading Strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>defamiliarization</td>
<td>a method of reading, writing, and thinking that emphasizes the interruption of automatization. Established as “остранение” (“estrangement”) by Viktor Shklovsky, defamiliarization attempts to turn the everyday into the strange, eye-catching, or dramatic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>denotation</td>
<td>the dictionary definition of a word, phrase, or idea; the standard and objective meaning of a word, phrase, or idea which, theoretically, does not vary based on interpretive position. Contrast with connotation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>description</td>
<td>a rhetorical mode that emphasizes eye-catching, specific, and vivid portrayal of a subject. Often integrates imagery and thick description to this end.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
dialogue a communication between two or more people. Can include any mode of communication, including speech, texting, e-mail, Facebook post, body language, etc.

direct quote the verbatim use of another author’s words. Can be used as evidence to support your claim, or as language to analyze/close-read to demonstrate an interpretation or insight.

diegetic gap from “diegesis,” the temporal distance between a first-person narrator narrating and the same person acting in the plot events. I.e., the space between author-as-author and author-as-character.

doubter a posture from which to read; reader makes efforts to challenge, critique, or undermine the text they encounter.

dynamic character a character who noticeably changes within the scope of a narrative, typically as a result of the plot events and/or other characters. Contrast with static character.

epiphany a character’s sudden realization of a personal or universal truth. See dynamic character.

essay a medium, typically nonfiction, by which an author can achieve a variety of purposes. Popularized by Michel de Montaigne as a method of discovery of knowledge: in the original French, “essay” is a verb that means “to try; to test; to explore; to attempt to understand.”

ethnography a study of a particular culture, subculture, or group of people. Uses thick description to explore a place and its associated culture.

ethos a rhetorical appeal based on authority, credibility, or expertise.

evidence a part or combination of parts that lends support or proof to an arguable topic, idea, or interpretation.

figurative language language which implies a meaning that is not to be taken literally. Common examples include metaphor, simile, personification, onomatopoeia, and hyperbole.

flat character a character who is minimally detailed, only briefly sketched or named. Generally less central to the events and relationships portrayed in a narrative. Contrast with round character.

fluff uneconomical writing: filler language or unnecessarily wordy phrasing. Although fluff occurs in a variety of ways, it can be generally defined as words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs that do not work hard to help you achieve your rhetorical purpose.

genre a specific category, subcategory, style, form, or medium (or combination of the above) of rhetoric. A genre may have a “generic imperative,” which is an expectation or set of expectations an
audience holds for a particular genre of rhetoric; the foundational assumptions that particular genres carry.

**imagery**
sensory language; literal or figurative language that appeals to an audience’s imagined sense of sight, sound, smell, touch, or taste.

**inquiry-based research**
research and research writing that is motivated by questions, not by answers.

**interpretation**
the process of consuming rhetoric to create meaning. “An interpretation” refers to a specific meaning we build as we encounter a text, focusing on certain ideas, language, or patterns.

**interpretive position**
the unique position from which each of us interprets a text—necessarily different for all people at any given time, and often different for the same person at different times in their life. Impacted by your purpose, posture, lens, and background.

**iterative**
literally, a repetition within a process. The writing process is iterative because it is non-linear and because an author often has to repeat, revisit, or reapproach different steps along the way. Analysis is iterative because it requires repeated critical encounters with a text.

**kairos**
the setting (time and place) or atmosphere in which an argument is actionable or ideal. Consider alongside “occasion.”

**lens**
a metaphor for the conceptual framework a reader applies to an analysis. A “lens” brings certain elements into focus, allowing the reader to attend to specific parts of a text to develop an interpretation.

**logical fallacy**
a line of logical reasoning which follows a pattern of that makes an error in its basic structure. For example, Kanye West is on TV; Animal Planet is on TV. Therefore, Kanye West is on Animal Planet.

**logos**
a rhetorical appeal to logical reasoning.

**medium**
the channel, technology, or form through which rhetoric is constructed and communicated. Different rhetorical situations value different media, and different media value different kinds of rhetoric.

**metacognition**
literally, “thinking about thinking.” May also include how thinking evolves and reflection on growth.

**mode**
the style and techniques employed by of a piece of rhetoric to achieve its purpose. Different rhetorical situations value different modes, and different modes value different kinds of rhetoric. Compare to genre.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mood</td>
<td>the emotional dimension which a reader experiences while encountering a text. Compare with tone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>motif</td>
<td>a recurring image or phrase that helps convey a theme. Similar to a symbol, but the relationship between symbol and symbolized is more one-to-one than between motif and theme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>multimedia / multigenre</td>
<td>a term describing a text that combines more than one media and/or more than one genre (e.g., an essay with embedded images; a portfolio with essays, poetry, and comic strips; a mixtape with song reviews).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>multipartial</td>
<td>a neologism from ‘impartial,’ refers to occupying and appreciating a variety of perspectives rather than pretending to have no perspective. Rather than unbiased or neutral, multipartial writers are balanced, acknowledging and respecting many different ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>narration</td>
<td>a rhetorical mode involving the construction and relation of stories. Typically integrates description as a technique.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>narrative pacing</td>
<td>the speed with which a story progresses through plot events. Can be influenced by reflective and descriptive writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>narrative scope</td>
<td>the boundaries of a narrative in time, space, perspective, and focus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>narrative sequence</td>
<td>the order of events included in a narrative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the naysayer's voice</td>
<td>a voice that disagrees with the writer or speaker included within the text itself. Can be literal or imaginary. Helps author respond to criticism, transition between ideas, and manage argumentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>occasion</td>
<td>the sociohistorical circumstances that prompt the production of a piece of rhetoric, determined by personal experiences, current events, language, and culture. Every text has an occasion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ongoing conversation</td>
<td>an analogy for the network of discourse surrounding a topic, issue, or idea. Adopted from Kenneth Burke.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paraphrase</td>
<td>author reiterates a main idea, argument, or detail of a text in their own words without drastically altering the length of the passage(s) they paraphrase. Contrast with summary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pathos</td>
<td>a rhetorical appeal to emotion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pattern</td>
<td>a notable sequence; structure or shape; recurring image, word, or phrase found in a piece of rhetoric.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plot</td>
<td>the events included within the scope of a narrative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>point-of-view</td>
<td>the perspective from which a story is told, determining both grammar (pronouns) and perspective (speaker’s awareness of events, thoughts, and circumstances).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**primacy effect**
a psychological effect experienced by most audiences: the opening statements of a text are more memorable than much of the content because they leave a ‘first impression’ in the audience’s memory. See recency effect.

**process**
a complex and multifaceted sequence that results in a product. As applied in “writing process,” non-linear and iterative. Contrast with product.

**product**
the end result of a creative process. Often shows little evidence of the process that created it.

**projection**
an automatized method of reading and encountering the world by which a person allows their current assumptions to determine the content and nature of their encounters. Contradicts genuine learning. See confirmation bias. Adopted from Jane Gallop.

**purpose**
the intended result of a piece of rhetoric. Can be stated using an infinitive verb phrase (“to entertain,” “to persuade,” “to explain”). Every text has at least one purpose, sometimes declared explicitly, and other times implied or hidden.

**recency effect**
a psychological effect experienced by most audiences: the concluding statements of a text are more memorable than much of the content because they are more recent in the audience’s memory. See primacy effect.

**reference**
a connection a text makes to another text. Can be explicit or implicit; might include allusion, allegory, quotation, or parody. Referencing text adopts some characteristics of the referenced text.

**reflection**
a rhetorical gesture by which an author looks back, through the diegetic gap, to demonstrate knowledge or understanding gained from the subject on which they are reflecting. May also include consideration of the impact of that past subject on the author’s future—“Looking back in order to look forward.”
**research question/path of inquiry**

a question, series of questions, or inquisitive topic that guides an inquiry-based research project.

**response**

a mode of writing that values the reader’s experience of and reactions to a text. Should also unpack what parts of the text contribute to that experience in an effort to practice analytical thinking.

**revision**

the iterative process of changing a piece of writing. Literally, revision: seeing your writing with “fresh eyes” in order to improve it. Includes changes on Global, Local, and Proofreading levels. Changes might include:

- rewriting (trying again, perhaps from a different angle or with a different focus)
- adding (new information, new ideas, new evidence)
- subtracting (unrelated ideas, redundant information, fluff)
- rearranging (finding more effective vectors or sequences of organization)
- switching out (changing words or phrases, substituting different evidence)
- mechanical clean-up (standardizing punctuation, grammar, or formatting)

**rhetoric**

a combination of textual strategies designed* to do something to someone. In other words, ‘rhetoric’ refers to language, video, images, or other symbols (or some combination of these) that informs, entertains, persuades, compels, or otherwise impacts an audience.

* Note: whether or not a text is deliberately designed to achieve a purpose, it will still have an impact. See authorial intent.

**rhetorical appeal**

a means by which a writer or speaker connects with their audience to achieve their purpose. Most commonly refers to logos, pathos, and ethos.

**rhetorical situation**

the circumstances in which rhetoric is produced, understood using the constituent elements of subject, occasion, audience, and purpose. Each element of the rhetorical situation carries assumptions and imperatives about the kind of rhetoric that will be
well received. Rhetorical situation will also influence mode and medium.

**Rogerian argument** a mode of argument by which an author seeks compromise by bringing different perspectives on an issue into conversation. Acknowledges that no one perspective is absolutely and exclusively ‘right’; values disagreement in order to make moral, political, and practical decisions.

**Round character** a character who is thoroughly characterized and dimensional, detailed with attentive description of their traits and behaviors. Contrast with flat character.

**Signpost** a phrase or sentence that directs your reader. It can help you make connections, guide your reader’s interpretation, ease transitions, and re-orient you to your thesis. Also known as a “signal phrase.”

**SQ3R** an engaged reading strategy to improve comprehension and interrupt projection. Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review.

**Stakes** the potential value or consequence of an exploration or argument; what stands to be gained from investigation of a subject or advocacy for a position. Consider also “stakeholders,” the people or institutions that stand to gain from the outcome of an investigation or argument.

**Static character** a character who remains the same throughout the narrative. Contrast with dynamic character.

**Subject** the topic, focus, argument, or idea explored in a text

**Summary** a rhetorical mode in which an author reiterates the main ideas, arguments, and details of a text in their own words, condensing a longer text into a smaller version. Contrast with paraphrase.

**Syllogism** a line of logical reasoning similar to the transitive property (If a=b and b=c, then a=c). For example, All humans need oxygen; Kanye West is a human. Therefore, Kanye West needs oxygen.

**Symbol** an artifact (usually something concrete) that stands in for (represents) something else (often something abstract).

**Synthesis** a cognitive and rhetorical process by which an author brings together parts of a larger whole to create a unique new product. Examples of synthesis might include an analytical essay, found poetry, or a mashup/remix.

**Text** any artifact through which a message is communicated. Can be written or spoken; digital, printed, or undocumented; video, image, or language. Every text is rhetorical in nature. See rhetoric.

**Text wrestling** a rhetorical mode in which an author analyzes a text using close reading, then presents an interpretation supported by evidence from the text.
**thesis (statement)**
a 1-3 sentence statement outlining the main insight(s), argument(s), or concern(s) of an essay; not necessary in every rhetorical situation; typically found at the beginning of an essay, though sometimes embedded later in the paper. Also referred to as a "So what?" statement.

**thick description**
economical and deliberate language which attempts to capture complex subjects (like cultures, people, or environments) in written or spoken language. Coined by anthropologists Clifford Geertz and Gilbert Ryle.

**tone**
the emotional register of the text. Compare with mood.

**use-value**
the degree to which a text is usable for your specific project. A source is not inherently good or bad, but rather useful or not useful. Use-value is influenced by many factors, including credibility. See credibility and CRAAP Test.
Images (in order of appearance)

All graphics not cited below were created by the author and are licensed in accordance with the Creative Commons under which the rest of the text is licensed.

Emmett Rose, Portland State University, 2017.


Endless Origami, https://endlessorigami.com/. No link or date available. Reproduced with attribution under Creative Commons license.


fluffypain. *presidents don’t have to be smart.* funnyjunk.com, 27 Sept. 2015, https://funnyjunk.com/Presidents+don+t+have+to+be+smart/funny-pictures/5697805#536742_5697361. Reproduced with attribution in accordance with Fair Use guidelines and funnyjunk.com policy.


Texts (in alphabetical order)

All texts not cited below were provided with written consent from anonymous student authors. All student authors have provided written consent for their work to be reproduced in this textbook.

Burke, Kenneth. *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, University of California Press, 1941.
Butler, Joey. “Under the Knife.” WR-121, Fall 2016, Portland Community College, Portland, OR.
Calli, Bryant. “Student Veterans and Their Struggle with Higher Education.” WR-121, Fall 2017, Portland Community College, Portland, OR.
Carroll, Jesse. “Catacombs intro revision.” WR-222, Fall 2015, Portland State University, Portland, OR.
Chan, Chris. “Innocence Again.” WR-121, Fall 2014, Portland State University, Portland, OR.
de Joya, Carlynn. “All Quiet.” WR-323, Winter 2017, Portland State University, Portland, OR.
Kreinheder, Beth. “Maggie as the Focal Point.” WR-200, Spring 2018, Portland State University, Portland, OR.
—-. “The Space Between the Racial Binary.” WR-200, Spring 2018, Portland State University, Portland, OR.
Lewis, Samantha. “Effective Therapy Through Dance and Movement.” WR-222, Fall 2015, Portland State University, Portland, OR.
Marina. “Analyzing ‘Richard Cory.’” WR-121, Spring 2018, Portland Community College, Portland, OR. [Marina has requested that only her first name be used here.]
McCallister, Josiah. “A Changing Ball-Game.” WR-222, Spring 2017, Portland State University, Portland, OR.
—-. “Pirates & Anarchy [Proposal].” WR-222, Spring 2017, Portland State University, Portland, OR.
—-. “Pirates & Anarchy: Social Banditry Toward a Moral Economy.” WR-222, Spring 2017, Portland State University, Portland, OR.
Naranjo, Celso. “What Does It Mean to Be Educated?” WR-323, Spring 2017, Portland State University, Portland, OR.
Reaume, Ross. “Home-Room.” WR-121, Fall 2014, Portland State University, Portland, OR.
——. “Normal Person: An Analysis of The Standards of Normativity in *A Plague of Tics*.” WR-121, Fall 2014, Portland State University, Portland, OR. The essay presented in this text is a synthesis of Mr. Reaume’s essay and another student’s essay; the latter student wishes to remain anonymous.
Richardson, Cassidy. “Untitled.” WR-323, Fall 2017, Portland State University, Portland, OR.
Taylor, Noel. “The Night She Cried.” WR-121, Fall 2014, Portland State University, Portland, OR.
——. Interview with Shane Abrams. 2 July 2017, Deep End Theater, Portland, OR.
Vo-Nguyen, Jennifer. “We Don’t Care About Child Slaves.” WR-222, Spring 2017, Portland State University, Portland, OR.
Yoakum, Kiley. “Comatose Dreams.” WR-121, Fall 2016, Portland Community College, Portland, OR.
---. “A Case of Hysterics [Proposal].” WR-222, Spring 2017, Portland State University, Portland, OR.
---. “The Hysterical Woman.” WR-222, Spring 2017, Portland State University, Portland, OR.