

INTRODUCTION

Reading and Writing with The Norton Reader

Reading with a Writer's Eye

During the coming term your writing instructor will ask you to read a selection of essays in *The Norton Reader*. Whether you read many essays or just a few, we hope that you will enjoy them. Reading essays in a college textbook may seem different from the reading you usually do in magazines, books, or online—and reading essays for a college course is different, even though you will find some aspects quite familiar. When you read on your own, you choose the topics and the formats, letting your personal interests guide you. When you read in a college writing course, you will discover essays that reflect your own interests, but your instructor will also introduce you to topics you've never before encountered, to forms of writing common in college but new to you, and to levels of difficulty that will prepare you for the reading in future college classes and the writing assigned in them.

In *The Norton Reader* you will find essays that address these various interests, forms, and goals. The 206 pieces collected here originally appeared in many different venues—from a daily newspaper in Baltimore to a beautifully produced book of art photographs, from a speech given publicly by a U.S. president to a collection of private meditations by a famous author. In an anthology like *The Norton Reader*, all of these selections appear in the same format, with the same typeface and layout; all have annotations to explain references and allusions; and all have questions to urge you to think about major issues and themes. In these visible ways, the essays in this collection differ from their originals.

Even so, we hope that the original pleasure, purpose, and power of each essay will come through. To help in the reading process, we provide you with information about the context in which the essay first appeared—including the readers for whom it was intended, the magazine, book, or newspaper in which it was published, and the knowledge that its original readers brought to their reading or listening. (See “Who is the audience?” p. xxi, and “What is the rhetorical context and purpose?” p. xxiv.) We also suggest, in this introduction, some ways of reading essays that will help you to analyze them. (See “What is the genre and its conventions?” p. xxvi.) Finally, we provide strategies for writing your own essays. (See “Writing in College,” p. xl.) Among the goals of a college reader like this one are connecting reading and writing, linking the two processes as interactive, and making your reading enrich, inspire, and improve your writing.

Most of the essays in *The Norton Reader* originally appeared in magazines

or books written for general readers—educated people but not specialists in the subject. The essays were read by people like you who wanted to know—or know more—about their subjects, who knew about—or were intrigued by—their authors, or who were tempted to launch into unfamiliar subjects because they encountered them in a magazine they ordinarily read. In the world outside the classroom, readers bring their own interests and motives to the essays they read. Although putting essays in a textbook might make them seem a little artificial, we hope to make your reading process more “real” by suggesting strategies that help you understand their contexts, purposes, and ongoing relevance.

When you begin reading an essay that your instructor assigns, ask yourself some or all of the following questions. These questions—about the audience for the essay, the author and his or her purpose in writing the essay, and the genre of the essay—will help you understand the essay, re-create its original context, analyze its meaning, recognize its organization and rhetorical strategies, and imagine how you might use similar strategies for your own writing.

WHO IS THE AUDIENCE?

An *audience* consists of those to whom the essay is directed—the people who read the article, listen to the speech, or view the text. The question about audience might be posed in related ways: For whom did the author write? What readers does the author hope to reach? What readers did he or she actually reach?

Sometimes that audience is a single reader, as in an entry in a private diary; sometimes the audience is national or international, as in an editorial for a newspaper like the *Washington Post* or the *New York Times*. Often, the audience shares a common interest, as the readers of an environmental magazine might do or the buyers of books of biography or history. To help you understand the original audience for each essay, we provide *contextual notes* at the bottom of the first page of each essay. Contextual notes give information about when and where the essay first appeared and, if it began as a talk, when and where it was delivered and to what audience. If we know, we try to give a sense of what the original audience was like or, at least, what we can gauge from the publishing context.

For example, the contextual note for Scott Russell Sanders's “Looking at Women” (p. 226) tells you that it appeared in the *Georgia Review*, a small-circulation magazine that attracts readers who enjoy fiction, essays, and poetry and who like essays with a literary feel. In contrast, Nicholas Kristof's “Saudis in Bikinis” (p. 340) appeared as an editorial in the *New York Times*, a daily newspaper with a huge national readership, where Kristof has a regular column on the Op-Ed page. Sanders could assume that his audience would like reading personal memoirs and biographical profiles, whereas Kristof knew that he needed to speak to a large, diverse national audience of people holding very different opinions on matters of education, politics, religion, and social ques-

tions like gender. Knowing these audiences gives a window into the writers' choices, strategies, and styles. Sanders's essays begins as if it were a story, in an intriguing yet leisurely way:

On that sizzling July afternoon, the girl who crossed at the stoplight in front of our car looked, as my mother would say, as though she had been poured into her pink shorts.

Kristof, in contrast, gets down to business quickly, since he knows he has only 750 or so words to explain the issue to his readers and convince them of his position. Kristof may begin with an intriguing observation—"On my first evening in Riyadh, I spotted a surreal scene"—but by his fourth sentence, he has reached the issue under consideration:

Saudi women may be regarded in the West as antique doormats covered in black veils, but the women themselves vigorously reject the stereotype. "It hurts when you hear what people say about us, that we're repressed."

The expectations of the two different audiences explain, in part, the writers' different approaches and styles.

Sometimes contextual notes give information about where the selection was published and how it was received—another way to understand the audience. Maya Angelou's "Graduation" (p. 34) comes from her autobiography, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, published in 1969; Angelou then continued writing her life story in five sequential volumes, most recently *A Song Flung Up to Heaven* (2002)—a sequence that testifies to her book's success and its appeal to a wide variety of readers. A different example of success with readers appears in the contextual note for David Baltimore's "Limiting Science: A Biologist's Perspective" (p. 957), which gives this information:

Written by a Nobel Prize-winning scientist and originally published in *Daedalus* (Spring 1978), the professional journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences; the Academy re-published the essay in *Daedalus* (Fall 2005).

This note lets you know that the author, a world-class biologist, meant to reach a wide audience of educated men and women and had the clout to argue for the importance of freedom in research. Members of the Academy of Arts and Sciences were his immediate audience, but the author knew that his argument would extend beyond them to politicians and government officials, given his own stature and that of the Academy. The fact that Baltimore's essay was published a second time, twenty-five years later, reveals that the American Academy of Arts and Sciences believes his argument remains timely in today's debate over issues of cloning, genetic engineering, and organ research.

In each contextual note, we try to explain a little about the books, magazines, and newspapers that published these essays—the *New York Times Magazine*, a large-circulation weekly magazine included with the Sunday newspaper, or the *Georgia Review*, a small, but well-respected literary journal published three times a year by the University of Georgia, or *I Know Why the*

Caged Bird Sings, a free-standing book. As editors, we could swamp you with information about publication and authorship, but we prefer to include more essays and keep contextual information focused on the original audience and publication context—that is, on where the essay appeared, who read it, and (if we know) what reaction it received.

WHO IS THE AUTHOR?

If the audience consists of those who read the essays, the *author* is the term we use for the person who writes them. Essayists, as authors, tend to introduce themselves to their audiences, revealing personal experiences, preferences, and beliefs that bear on the subject at hand and that help explain the essayist's point of view. The essayist's self-presentation—sometimes called *persona*, sometimes *ethos*—is more important than the essayist's actual name. In "We Do Abortions Here: A Nurse's Story" (p. 747), the title gives us an important fact about the author and her perspective: she is a nurse and has seen abortions up close. Knowing this fact is more important than knowing the essayist's name (Sallie Tisdale). In "Who Shot Johnny?" (p. 399), Debra Dickerson introduces herself directly to her readers in the opening paragraph:

I am unrepentant and vocal about having gained admittance to Harvard through affirmative action; I am a feminist, stoic about my marriage chances as a well-educated, 36-year-old black woman who won't pretend to need help taking care of herself.

Who the author is—where she comes from, what her background is, what her educational and professional experience are—becomes part of Dickerson's story, and it influences her perspective on the random shooting of her nephew, about which she writes.

Not all authors are as direct as Tisdale or Dickerson. In "Insomnia" (p. 274) Edward Thomas doesn't really tell us who he is—other than a man with sleepless nights. But you don't need to know much more than that to appreciate his brief essay; he presents himself as "a sleepless man" rather than as an Englishman or a poet (both of which he was). Nor do you need to know that David Guterson, the author of "Enclosed. Encyclopedic. Endured: The Mall of America" (p. 210), later became famous for the novel *Snow Falling on Cedars*. In his article about the largest mall in America, Guterson presents himself as a reporter, observing what he sees, shaping the information for his readers, and posing questions for himself and them about what the mall means and why it is so popular. His distance and objectivity as a reporter are important aspects of his self-presentation, of who he is as author of this essay.

Because we believe that essayists prefer to introduce themselves and reveal details of personality and experience that they consider most relevant, we do not preface each essay with a biographical note. We think they, as authors, should step forward and we, as editors, should stand back and let them speak. But if you want to learn more about the writer of an essay, you can check the *Authors* section at the end of the book. The entries there provide information

about the men and women who wrote the essays. Putting this information at the end of the book gives you a choice. You may already know something about an author and not wish to consult this section. You may wish to find out something about an author before you read his or her writing. Or you may just prefer to encounter the authors on their own terms, letting them identify themselves within the essay. Sometimes knowing who authors are and where their voices come from helps readers grasp what they say—but sometimes it doesn't.

WHAT IS THE RHETORICAL CONTEXT AND PURPOSE?

The *rhetorical context*, sometimes called *rhetorical situation* or *rhetorical occasion*, refers to the context—social, political, biographical, historical—in which writing takes place and becomes public. The term *purpose*, in a writing class, refers to the author's goal—whether to inform, to persuade, to entertain, to analyze, or to do something else through the essay. We could also pose this question as follows: What goals did the writer have in composing and publishing the essay? What effect did the author wish to have on the audience?

For some selections, the rhetorical context is indicated by the *title*. Abraham Lincoln's "Second Inaugural Address" (p. 881) and John F. Kennedy's "Inaugural Address" (p. 883) were presidential speeches made on the formal occasion of their swearing in. An inauguration represents a significant moment in a leader's—and the nation's—life. The speech given on such an occasion requires a statement of the president's goals for the next four years. In addition to the title, you can discover more about the rhetorical context of a president's inaugural speech in the *opening paragraph* because he (so far it's only *he*) will often refer to the historical context early on. Lincoln, for example, refers back to his first inaugural address and the "impending civil war"; then he acknowledges that the war continues and that he prays "this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away." In the midst of the American civil war, Lincoln knows that he must, as president, address the political conflict that faces the nation, offer hope for its resolution, and set the moral tone for the aftermath. That's his purpose.

Like the presidential speech, many essays establish the rhetorical context in their opening paragraphs. Editorials and Op-Eds begin with a "hook"—an opening reference to the issue at hand or the news report under consideration. You might even say that the editorial writer "creates" the rhetorical context and shows us her purpose straight away. In her Op-Ed "Get a Knife, Get a Dog, but Get Rid of Guns" (p. 405), Molly Ivins begins with "Guns. Everywhere guns"—letting her readers know that she's addressing the hot topic of gun control and establishing her position right up front (she's pro-control). Ivins's main purpose is to persuade others to adopt her position, but another purpose is, through humor, to amuse her readers and laugh the anti-control group out of court. Jo-Ann Pilardi's "The Immigration Problem Is About Us,

Not Them" (p. 406) reveals, in its title, her rhetorical purpose: to re-consider the immigration debate. In her opening paragraphs, Pilardi reminds us of the social and political context:

The immigration debates always focus on small brown bodies jumping fences and scooting through the brush of our Southwestern states (land that was *Mexico* about 150 years ago). Our self-righteous anger at those brown bodies is fueled by our narrow use of the word "illegal"—a term reserved only for those immigrant workers.

Even if you haven't followed newspaper reports about immigration, you can tell from this opening that the writer is engaging a highly contested American debate about what to do about immigrants who cross the U.S.-Mexico border and enter the United States. Pilardi's purpose is to disrupt the us/them thinking that hinders fruitful discussion of the issue.

Sometimes we provide information about the rhetorical context in the *contextual note* (described above) or in the *annotations* to each essay (described below). The contextual note for Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" explains that the speech was:

Delivered on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., on August 28, 1963, at one of the largest Civil Rights demonstrations in U.S. history.

The annotations (footnotes marked with small numerals) give further clues. For instance, note 3 on p. 909 tells us:

George Wallace (1919–1998), Alabama's segregationist governor, used big legal terms such as "interposition" and "nullification" in his unsuccessful attempt to prevent the integration of the University of Alabama.

This annotation explains who Wallace was (a fact that King's audience would have known), but it also reveals that King is answering the arguments of his segregationist opponent, that he is debating and talking back. Use the contextual notes and annotations to help re-create the original context. But if you really want to comprehend that rhetorical occasion in 1963, when the Rev. Martin Luther King spoke in Washington, you need to use your imagination. Envision the Lincoln Memorial in the U.S. capital, fill the space with thousands of demonstrators, and wait in anticipation for one of the greatest American orators to begin his speech. Or watch a video of King at youtube.com.

Here is some additional information about *annotations* and how to use them as you read an essay: The annotations are explanatory footnotes—a common feature of a textbook. Commercial magazines and newspapers usually do not include footnotes, whereas academic writing often does. When the original authors wrote the footnotes themselves, we indicate that in square brackets, for example, [Angelou's note] or [Wallace's note]. This tells you that the author wished to cite an expert, add information, or send the reader to another

source. In most cases, however, we the editors have written the footnotes to help with difficult words, allusions, and references. We provide information about people, places, works, theories, and other unfamiliar things that the original audience may have known. For example, for Maya Angelou's "Graduation" (p. 34) we give an annotation for Gabriel Prosser and Nat Turner, but not Abraham Lincoln and Christopher Columbus. Angelou's readers, many of them African American, would have known that Prosser and Turner were executed leaders of slave rebellions in the nineteenth century. But because not all readers today know (or remember) this part of American history, we add a footnote.

Here's a final important point: Annotation, while it facilitates the making of meaning in reading, can never take its place. Reading is an active process. Experienced readers take responsibility for that action—reading critically, constructing meaning, interpreting what they read. If our annotations help you read critically, then use them; if they interfere, then just continue reading the main text and skip over them.

WHAT IS THE GENRE AND ITS CONVENTIONS?

Genre is a term used by composition and literature teachers to refer to form—specifically, to forms that have common features and follow certain conventions of style, presentation, and subject matter. Literary genres include the short story and novel, the tragedy and comedy, the lyric and the epic poem. Essay genres include the memoir and the biographical profile, the visual analysis and Op-Ed, the literacy narrative and the parable. For the essay, *genre* partially determines the form's content and organization, but it should never do so in a "cookie-cutter" way.

Conventions are practices or customs commonly used in a genre—like a handshake for a social introduction or a eulogy at a funeral. Genre and convention are linked concepts, the one implying the other. Scientific articles (a genre) begin with a title and an abstract (conventions) and include sections about the methodology and the results (also conventions). Op-Eds, by convention, begin with a "hook"; profiles of persons or places include a physical description of the subject; literacy narratives include a key episode in the acquisition of reading or writing skills. But in reading and writing essays, conventions should not be treated in an automatic, rigid, or insincere way. They should be seen as guidelines, strategies, or special features, not as rules.

As you read an essay, think about its form: what it includes, how the writer presents the subject, what features seem distinctive. If you read a pair or group of essays assigned by your teacher, you might ask yourself whether they represent the same genre or are noticeably different. If they are the same, you will recognize similar features; if they are different, you will notice less overlap.

Below are some common genres included in *The Norton Reader* and some features to watch for as you read:

Narrative genres

Narrative genres tell a story, using vivid details, about people, events, and conflicts or crises. They also reflect on the meaning of the stories, offering the reader an interpretation or explanation of what occurred. Common narrative genres include the autobiographical essay, literacy narrative, historical narrative, and biographical narrative.

Autobiographical essay The genre of *autobiography* focuses on a significant personal experience in the writer's past and draws out the meaning as the writer tells the story and reflects on the experience. Sometimes an autobiographical essay is called *memoir*, *personal narrative*, or *mini-autobiography*. Its key features include a dramatic event or episode; vivid details and narration; and an interweaving of narration with reflection on and interpretation of the essayist's experience.

If you are assigned Alice Walker's "Beauty: When the Other Dancer Is the Self" (p. 69) or George Orwell's "Shooting an Elephant" (p. 852), you will immediately spot the dramatic event. For Walker, it is the day a BB pellet strikes her eye and causes "a glob of whitish scar tissue, a hideous cataract." For Orwell, it is the day when he, a young British official in Burma, must shoot an elephant that has gone "must." Walker introduces the drama in two italicized sentences: "*It was great fun being cute. But then, one day, it ended.*" In the remainder of the essay she reflects on how the injury affected her sense of self, her identity. Orwell builds up to the dramatic moment more slowly, taking us through the thoughts and events that lead to his pulling the trigger. As he tells his story, Orwell reflects on the motivations of his action and reaches a point of insight:

And it was at this moment, as I stood there with the rifle in my hands, that I first grasped the hollowness, the futility of the white man's dominion in the East.

These two essayists handle the conventions of their autobiographical essays differently, with different narrative styles and different pacing, but they both focus on a significant event and draw out its significance in the course of the essay.

Literacy narrative A subcategory of the autobiographical essay, the *literacy narrative* focuses on learning to read or write. Like other narrative genres, it uses personal experience, requires vivid details and a sharp narrative style, and gives a clear indication of the narrative's significance. Teachers frequently assign this genre in composition courses, for reading or writing or both.

If you read Frederick Douglass's "Learning to Read" (p. 428) or Ben Franklin's "Learning to Write" (p. 539), you will encounter two classic versions of the literacy narrative. For Douglass, a slave, reading was a forbidden, illegal activity, so to learn to read he was "compelled to resort to various stratagems," as he phrases it. Douglass's literacy narrative includes rich details about his life as a slave, the strategies he used to acquire literacy, and the essential value that

reading held for someone who did not want to remain "a slave for life." For Franklin, a young man trained as a printer, writing became a means to raise himself in his social and professional world, and his narrative explains some of the tactics that allowed him to succeed. As you read Douglass or Franklin, watch for the details they choose to include and the anecdotes they recount as important to their stories. Other literacy narratives in *The Norton Reader* include Eudora Welty's "Clamorous to Learn" (p. 432) and Richard Rodriguez's "Aria" (p. 517), both by modern American writers who tell of their educational experiences with fascinating, sometimes painful details and with serious reflection on the meaning of reading and writing in American culture.

Historical narrative This genre also relies on narrative—on telling a story—but focuses on the larger social or political patterns that the story reveals. Like other narrative genres, *historical narrative* requires vivid details and an indication of the narrative's significance, but it may incorporate more than a single, dramatic event (though it will often begin by describing one) and offer multiple stories or episodes.

You will find several examples of historical narrative in the "History" section, including Barbara Tuchman's "This Is the End of the World: The Black Death" (p. 779) and Philip Gourevitch's "After the Genocide" (p. 839). Both writers know that vivid descriptions and compelling anecdotes are central to good historical narratives. In her opening paragraph, Tuchman shows us—in gory detail—what the "black death" (bubonic plague) looked like:

The diseased sailors showed strange swellings about the size of an egg or an apple in the armpits and groin. The swellings oozed blood and pus and were followed by spreading boils and black blotches on the skin from internal bleeding.

A gruesome picture, but it captures the reader's attention and fascinates us enough to read on. Gourevitch opens more quietly by setting his historical narrative in eastern Rwanda, but the vivid details of death, murder, and genocide appear very soon:

At least fifty mostly decomposed cadavers covered the floor, wadded in clothing, their belongings strewn about and smashed. Machedet skulls had rolled here and there.

This description, which continues in almost clinical detail for a long paragraph, sets the context for the history of the Rwandan genocide that Gourevitch will tell. But it does much more: it establishes the significance of the event, justifies the label of mass murder or "genocide," and alerts the reader to the historical and international crisis in Africa. Both essayists continue with many episodes—rather than focus on a single one—because their histories require evidence of widespread events and consequences.

Biographical narrative The *biographical narrative* is a subcategory of the historical narrative discussed above, and it is related to the *biographical profile*

described below. Sometimes writers choose to focus their accounts of historical events on a specific person, perhaps because that person was a "key player," the moving force in the event, or perhaps because that person allows a window into how a large historical event felt to an average citizen.

You will find both techniques—and variations on them—in essays throughout *The Norton Reader*. Walt Whitman tells the story of an American president's assassination in his "Death of Abraham Lincoln" (p. 803). Logically, Whitman focuses his narrative on the president, telling what happened on the day of the assassination but including other biographical details that he recalls from previous sightings of Lincoln and ending with his reflections on the significance of what he calls "a heroic-eminent life." In contrast, the authors of three mini-biographies included under the rubric "World War II: Victims, Villains, Heroes" (p. 831) focus on "little people"—ordinary or average men and women who, in the throes of war, took heroic stances or did heroic deeds that involved great danger. As you read historical and biographical narratives, compare their features and try to notice their conventions: people and places need to be described with accuracy and interest, stories need to be told with clarity and good pace, significance needs to emerge from the narrative, not just be tacked on at the end.

Descriptive genres

Descriptive genres let the reader know how a person, place, or thing looks, sounds, feels, or maybe even smells. But they do more: they give a dominant impression, interpret a person's actions, offer a reflection on the significance of place, or in some other way put the objective details into a larger framework. Descriptive genres in *The Norton Reader* include the profile of a person, profile of a place, and natural history.

Profile of a person Also called a *biographical sketch* or a *mini-biography*, the *profile of a person* features an individual or a group of people and uses firsthand knowledge, interviews, and/or research to present its subject. Since readers like to read about interesting subjects, it is sometimes assumed that the person must be interesting beforehand. But, really, it's the writer who makes the person interesting by discovering special characteristics or qualities through interviews or observation, by finding an interesting angle from which to present the subject, and by including engaging details, anecdotes, or dialogue to enliven the portrait. These are the special features, or conventions, of the biographical profile.

Profiles can be free-standing essays or parts of books. Tom Wolfe's "Yeager" (p. 148) is a portrait of the astronaut Chuck Yeager and part of a book about the first American astronauts in space, *The Right Stuff*. When you read this essay, you will see that Wolfe does not begin in the usual, boring way with date of birth, place of birth, parents, and education (though those details eventually make it into the profile). Instead, Wolfe lets us hear Yeager's voice by imitating its sound and style. Then Wolfe suggests the importance of Yeager's

ger's place in American aviation by describing how every American pilot tries to imitate this man with "the right stuff." The profile is chock-full of tales about Yeager's daring, often reckless, escapades—even as it narrates the story of how Yeager made history by breaking the sound barrier.

Profiles about family members can be difficult. Even if an essayist loves his or her parents, not every reader will find someone else's parents distinctive, memorable, or worth reading about. So it takes vivid details, humorous (or chilling) stories, and a bit of distance to succeed in the family profile. Annie Dillard *makes* her mother memorable in "An American Childhood" (p. 132) by recalling idiosyncratic stories and sayings, including the line "Terwilliger bunts one" that amuses and annoys her mother. Scott Russell Sanders, perhaps unfortunately, remembers too many characteristic episodes about his father. His profile, titled "Under the Influence" (p. 121), begins: "My father drank." Both of these writers had ordinary parents, but they make them seem extraordinary by the vividness of their memories, the special angles they take, and the overarching perspective on their parents' character that they bring to the essay.

Profile of a place Places can also become the focus of a profile, in a subcategory sometimes simply called a *place essay*. The features of this genre involve discovering the special characteristics or qualities of the place, finding an interpretive framework in which to present it, and including engaging details, anecdotes, or dialogue to enliven the essay. Since places can't speak, the essayist must speak for them and say enough about them to make them come alive.

Essayists re-create places in different ways. Margaret Atwood, writing about northern Canada in "True North" (p. 199), begins with a camp song that she—like lots of other Canadians and Americans—remembers from childhood:

Land of the silver birch,
Home of the beaver,
Where still the mighty moose
Wanders at will.
Blue lake and rocky shore,
I will return once more.

Atwood goes on to re-create the northern landscape that she loves so well, that brings "tears to our eyes, not for simple reasons." In contrast, David Guterson begins with hard facts in "The Mall of America" (p. 210):

140,000 hot dogs sold each week, 10,000 permanent jobs, 44 escalators and 17 elevators, 12,750 parking spaces, 13,300 short tons of steel, \$1 million in cash dispersed weekly from 8 automatic-teller machines.

Guterson's facts give us the immense scale of the mall—details that boggle the imagination, but that speak to some deep-seated American desire for immensity. Both essayists bring their places to life, but in different ways and with different approaches to understanding the meaning of a place.

If a profile includes both person and place, it is what the writer Anne Fadiman calls a "Character in Context" piece. Many times, we learn about a person by seeing him or her in a characteristic space; the place defines the person, the person defines the place. N. Scott Momaday's "The Way to Rainy Mountain" (p. 182) gives us a sacred place of the Kiowas, an old landmark that they called "Rainy Mountain." Yet his profile is also about his grandmother, Abo, whom he associates with the sacred mountain:

Her forebears came down from the high country in western Montana nearly three centuries ago. They were mountain people, a mysterious tribe of hunters whose language has never been positively classified in any major group.

To understand the significance of Momaday's return to Rainy Mountain, we must understand the mountain's associations with his grandmother. And vice versa: to understand Abo's significance to her grandson, we must understand the meaning of Rainy Mountain to the Kiowa.

Natural history The term *natural history* can refer generally to any historical writing about nature, but it also designates a genre related to the profile: the life cycle or biography of a plant or animal. (Think of it as profiling not a person but a bear or a dragonfly or a weed like goldenrod.) You will find some of these essays in the "Nature and Environment" section of this book, and you may also encounter them in biology classes. They describe a plant or animal, take it through its life cycle, and sometimes explain its significance or relationship to the human species.

In "The Spider and the Wasp" (p. 636), Alexander Petrunkevitch describes the life cycle of two animals, starting with the tarantula, then moving to its archenemy, the digger wasp of the genus *Pepsis*. His essay raises a puzzling scientific question about "intelligence pitted against instinct—a strange situation in which the victim, though fully able to defend itself, submits unwittingly to its destruction." In "The Work of Honeybees" (p. 629), Allison Wallace, too, gives a natural history—in this case of a mature worker bee she names "Bella." Wallace puzzles not over a scientific question, but a human one: a question about the meaning of work. As she observes the seemingly endless, repetitive work of the honeybees, it leads her to ask about the work humans do:

Everything you do will be insignificant, but you must do it anyway. The question persists: what in the world for?

Both versions of natural history—raising scientific questions, raising questions about human actions—appear in *The Norton Reader*. Look for them in David Foster Wallace's "Consider the Lobster" (p. 75), in Henry David Thoreau's "The Battle of the Ants" (p. 776), in Edward Abbey's "The Serpents of Paradise" (p. 623), and even in Aldo Leopold's "Marshland Elegy" (p. 643), which gives a natural history of one of the writer's favorite places.

Analytic genres

Analytic genres carefully and methodically examine a text, an image, a cultural object, or a social trend by breaking it into parts, closely reading its components, and noting how the parts work in relation to the whole. In *The Norton Reader* you will find examples of textual analysis, visual analysis, and cultural analysis.

Textual analysis Also called *close reading*, *textual analysis* focuses on written words. It examines words and phrases for explicit and implicit meanings; it looks for similes (comparisons using *like* or *as*) and metaphors (comparisons without explicit connectors) to reveal patterns of association and hidden meanings; and it interprets the whole text on the basis of these methodical, individual observations. The *text* may be anything from the Bible or Koran, to poems and novels, to ads, billboards, or official memos.

In “The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians” (p. 1144), Rita Dove analyzes a book from the New Testament. Traditionally, Christians have analyzed the Bible to clarify difficult or obscure passages, to understand the book’s message, and to apply it to their lives. Dove recalls her first experience with biblical analysis in a Sunday school class at her church, African Methodist Episcopal:

I was thirteen when the man who would introduce me to the apostle Paul walked into our senior Sunday-school class. He was tall, dark, and hellishly handsome, severely dressed in a matte-black narrow suit and black shirt from which rose a ring of shocking white, like a slipped halo.

In class, Dove’s teacher focuses on words like “grace” and concepts like “mortal sin.” But little details in this opening description—“hellishly handsome,” “like a slipped halo”—clue us into the fact that Dove, the adult essayist, will do her own textual analysis, not rely on one handed down from a male clergyman. As you read her essay, notice how Dove probes the meaning of words like “human agency” and delves into the implications of textual metaphors, like Paul’s “comparing the church to a marriage.” For a different take on analysis, consider Gilbert Highet’s essay “The Mystery of Zen” (p. 1201), and note how he uses analysis (to understand the concept of *meditation*), yet ultimately rejects analysis as a tool for comprehending Zen’s mystery: “The doctrine of Zen,” he states, “cannot be analyzed from without: it must be lived.”

Visual analysis Like textual analysis, *visual analysis* looks for explicit and implicit meanings; searches for patterns of association and hidden intentions; and interprets the whole object on the basis of these methodical, individual observations. Instead of a written text, visual analysis focuses on an image, a photograph, a painting, or another visual phenomenon.

Some visual analyses have as their goal the explanation of the image itself. For example, John Updike’s “Moving Along” (p. 1087) looks closely at two paintings—one by a sixteenth-century Indian artist, the other by a contempo-

rary American “Funk Artist.” Updike devotes a paragraph to each painting, describing what he sees, commenting on the little details, and connecting both works to the theme of “moving along” and the human desire to walk, run, ride, and fly. Other selections use visual analysis as part of a larger argument. An example of this appears in H. Bruce Franklin’s “From Realism to Virtual Reality: Images of America’s Wars” (p. 810). Franklin writes as a historian; to make his argument about how changes in technology affect our understanding of war, he analyzes a sequence of images from the Civil War through the Iraqi war of the 1990s. As you read this essay, watch how Franklin cites historical descriptions of the photographs, refers to the “dominant metaphor” or “structuring metaphor” of movies and television shows, and points to motifs repeated from image to image.

In *The Norton Reader* you will find essays that combine textual and visual analysis or that use images to trigger both kinds of analysis. (Watch for essays that include photographs, drawings, graphs, and other visual material.) In writing “Strangers” (p. 158), Toni Morrison began by thinking about a book of photographs, interpreting the images, and pondering their significance, but her essay also analyzes the ethical implications of writing narratives, of creating life stories for people she does not know. In other essays, such as N. Scott Momaday’s “The Way to Rainy Mountain” (p. 182) and Fred Strebeigh’s “The Wheels of Freedom: The Bicycle in China” (p. 344), the authors provide images to accompany their prose: in Momaday’s case, his father’s drawings; in Strebeigh’s, photographs he took during his travels in China at the time of the Tiananmen uprising. These images enrich the primary analyses of the authors by underscoring key points and adding visual evidence to their arguments.

Cultural analysis This genre, called both *cultural analysis* and *cultural critique*, takes an object, trend, fad, or other phenomenon as the subject of its analysis. It uses the strategies of textual and visual analysis described above, adding personal response and library research, if desirable, to explain and interpret. Examples of this form appear in the section “Cultural Critique.”

What kinds of cultural objects and trends do essayists analyze? Almost anything and everything, it seems. The French critic Roland Barthes analyzes toys, concluding that they “literally prefigure the world of adult functions” (p. 342). The American writer Fred Strebeigh analyzes the Chinese bicycle (p. 344), interviewing people who rely on them for work and play, giving us a history of their manufacture, reflecting on their names (“Forever,” “Flying Pi-geon”), and concluding that they represent “the wheels of freedom” to many Chinese people. The African American scholar Henry Louis Gates analyzes hairstyles popular in his youth (p. 323)—how they were created, how movie stars, singers, and black icons popularized them, and why the styles remain so important for him.

Other essayists analyze trends or social practices. Both Jessica Mitford and Thomas Lynch, for example, look at the funeral industry, one from the outside, the other from within. In “Behind the Formaldehyde Curtain” (p. 310), Mitford engages many different strategies in making her analysis—

from "the arrival of the corpse at the mortuary" to the process of embalming to the presentation of the body for open-casket viewing. Her goal is to debunk the "American way of death," as she calls it, and to show how the undertaker has assumed the place formerly held by the clergyman. In "The Bang & Whimper and the Boom" (p. 317), Lynch, a former funeral director whose father was also in the business, analyzes caskets rather than processes. (He calls condoms and caskets the "late-century emblems of sex and death.") Lynch describes the caskets, visually re-creating them for the reader (an important strategy for this genre); he also discusses the language with which the undertaker presents the caskets (a strategy drawn from textual analysis). In other words, in doing cultural analysis, essayists draw on the tactics of textual and visual analysis, and add to them analyses of social practices, including everyday and unusual rituals.

Argumentative genres

Forms of modern argument have their roots in classical Greece and Rome—that is, they go back at least 2,500 years. The Greek philosopher Aristotle held that there were really only two essential parts of an argument: (1) the statement of the case, and (2) the proof of the case. But he conceded that in practice most orators added two other parts: an introduction and a conclusion.

Roman rhetoricians like Quintilian refined and expanded this simple Aristotelian approach to include five or six parts:

- (1) *exordium*: the introduction
- (2) *narratio*: the statement or exposition of the case under discussion
- (3) *divisio*: the outline of the points or steps in the argument
- (4) *confirmatio*: the proof of the case (sometimes called *probatio*)
- (5) *confutatio*: the refutation of opposing arguments
- (6) *peroratio*: the conclusion

Yet Roman rhetoricians also acknowledged that, for any given argument, orators might want to omit parts. (They might, for example, omit *divisio* if the steps of the argument were simple.) And orators would often rearrange the parts of their speeches. They might, for instance, refute an opponent's arguments before advancing their own case.

Unless you participate in a debating society, you—like most modern college students—won't see this formal version of classical argument very often. Yet all Americans study it in civics class when they discuss the "Declaration of Independence" (p. 876) because Thomas Jefferson used the tactics of classical rhetoric as revived in the eighteenth century. Today, we hear its legacy in public speeches and see traces of it in newspaper editorials. The Greek and Roman philosophers weren't so much prescribing a genre as they were describing common argumentative practices. It makes sense that, if you want to argue

your case effectively, you need to introduce it, outline the key points, present your evidence, and refute your opponent's position—all the steps they described. You will find these steps in the argumentative genres considered below: Op-Eds and editorials, public speeches and orations, and parabes.

Op-Eds and editorials This genre focuses on issues of public interest and encourages ordinary citizens to contribute their perspectives, opinions, and arguments to the public debate. *Op-Eds* and *editorials* begin with a "hook"—a link to a recent event or news article that grabs readers' attention—as the introduction. Specific features, or conventions, include a forthright statement of position, evidence in support, often a counterargument or rebuttal of the opposition, and sometimes a formal conclusion.

Brent Staples's "Why Colleges Shower Their Students with A's" (p. 410) features most of these conventions. Staples begins by citing the principle of a famous economist, Milton Friedman, to the effect that superior products flourish and shabby ones die out. But Staples refutes this principle when applied to colleges and argues that, in fact, colleges are giving too many A's and thus "stoking grade inflation and devaluing degrees." When you read Staples's Op-Ed, note how he puts forward his evidence, then rebuts a common argument of his opposition:

The argument that grades are rising because students are better prepared is simply not convincing. The evidence suggests that students and parents are demanding—and getting—what they think of as their money's worth.

Staples wraps up with some proposals to remedy grade inflation and a final stab at parents and students who are "addicted to counterfeit excellence." Although he no doubt wrote from the evidence he had gathered and the conclusion he had independently reached, you will discover that Staples uses five of the six parts of the "formal" classical argument—all but number 3.

Public speeches and orations Because *speeches* and *orations* derive directly, if also distantly, from the classical tradition of argument, they often show its formal features. Many speechwriters introduce the issue at hand, state their position, offer evidence in support and counterarguments against, and sum up—sometimes with a high rhetorical flourish. These modern tactics are based on the older classical conventions.

William Lloyd Garrison, the nineteenth-century American abolitionist, shows his knowledge of public oratory in "No Compromise with Slavery" (p. 910). His speech begins: "Let me define my positions, and at the same time challenge anyone to show wherein they are untenable." Garrison marshals evidence, uses logic, and appeals to the law of God to make his case and to refute those who advocate slavery. So, too, does Elizabeth Cady Stanton in the "Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions" (p. 879), presented at the first U.S. women's rights convention and modeled on the American Declaration of Independence. A century later, the Rev. Martin Luther King, one of the great civil rights leaders and orators of modern America, continues the tradition in

his "I Have a Dream" speech (p. 907) and in "A Letter from Birmingham Jail" (p. 892). In the first, King argues that America must make good on the Emancipation Proclamation and "open the doors of opportunity to all of God's children"; in the second, he makes the case for civil disobedience, taking his audience through the steps of his thinking and quietly refuting those who disagree. It is no coincidence that these important American speeches and documents use the formal conventions of argument: in so doing, the speakers demonstrate their education, ability, and right to debate the pressing issues of their day.

James van Tholen's "Surprised by Death" (p. 931) is *not* an oration or formal argument; it is a Sunday sermon, preached upon van Tholen's return to the pulpit after months of treatment for cancer. Van Tholen uses techniques from several genres, including autobiographical narrative as he talks about his illness and fear in fighting cancer, and textual analysis as he analyzes the meaning of the Christian concept of *grace* and the Greek word *eti* in Romans 5. Yet van Tholen also makes an argument: that he is right to have hope, "unwavering hope," in God and that his listeners must have this hope, too. His personal experience and his careful study of the Bible become part of the evidence he marshals to state this conclusion.

Parables A *parable* is a story that illustrates a point, poses or answers a question, or suggests a lesson. A parable can imply an argument—though it does not make that argument directly or simply. The word *parable* means "thrown beside," and there's a sense in which any attempt to interpret a parable too specifically will always just miss the mark: the form is too complex to be reduced to a single meaning or simple moral. It is worth considering the parable as an alternative form of argument—a genre a writer might use when more formal arguments won't quite work. Feminists, for example, have sometimes turned to the parable when they find that masculine logic fails to grasp an issue. Native Americans, including Chief Seattle, have traditionally used the parable to refute the wrong-headed logic of white Americans.

Most religious traditions include parables—such as those told by Jesus or the Zen parables we include just before the section on "Philosophy and Religion." In the Zen parable "Muddy Road" (p. 1131) there's a literal-minded character, Ekido, who lives strictly by the rules, and a more knowing character, Tanzan, who has deeper wisdom. Ekido knows that a monk is supposed to avoid women, so he chastises Tanzan for picking up a "lovely girl in a silk kimono and sash" and carrying her across a muddy intersection. Tanzan responds with a question: "I left the girl there. Are you still carrying her?" Tanzan's question suggests that it's not the literal touching of a woman that matters. What matters is sexual desire. By carrying the image of the girl in his mind and brooding on it, Ekido is harboring desire within his heart, perhaps giving it space to grow. The parable is about the complexities of human desire—but it's hard to argue Tanzan's position without using many more words and perhaps being less effective. The parable—a narrative with a probing final twist—does the trick.

As you read arguments in various sections of *The Norton Reader*—whether in "Ethics" or "Politics," in "Spoken Words" or "Science and Technology"—consider where and why authors use formal techniques (conventions of argument) and where and why they turn to alternative strategies—strategies identified with other genres. In the end, the goal is to make an effective argument, to convince the reader of the validity of your evidence, or urge the listener to take a prescribed course of action.

STRATEGIES FOR CRITICAL READING

The previous pages have focused on reading specific kinds of essays and on strategies for recognizing genres and their conventions. Here we offer some general tips for approaching the reading your instructor assigns this semester.

Preview the essay

Think about the essay's title, read its opening paragraph, skim the topic sentences (usually, the first sentence of each paragraph). Look at the contextual note on the first page, and try to imagine the experience, issue, or debate that motivated the essayist to write. *Previewing* is a technique widely used for college reading, but not all writing teachers encourage it. Some teachers encourage previewing for academic writing, explaining that it helps readers focus on key issues; other teachers discourage previewing, pointing out that a good essay—like a good novel or movie—can be ruined by knowing the ending.

Write in the margin

As you read, note points that seem interesting and important, forecast issues that you think the writer will address, pose questions of your own. Talk back. Most essayists want active readers who think about what the essay says, implies, and urges as a personal response or course of action. Similarly, note points that you don't understand or that you find ambiguous. Puzzling over a sentence or a passage with your classmates can lead to crucial points of debate. Mark your queries and use them to energize class discussion.

Analyze the illustrations

Many of the essays in *The Norton Reader* include illustrations from their original publications. Think about how the essays and the images "speak" to each other. Consider whether the images enrich, highlight, or possibly challenge the essay. Does the image primarily illustrate the essay, or does it emphasize a feature unexplained by the essayist? Does the image enrich and make clearer one aspect of the writing, or does it minimize certain aspects of the subject, perhaps aspects you find important? What do you see in the images that the essayist discusses or explains? What do you see that he or she overlooks or

minimizes? Thinking about images can help you clarify the author's argument or reveal points the author may have missed.

Summarize the essay

Write a summary of the essay. Begin by making a list of its key points and identifying the evidence used in support of each; then try to state briefly, in your own words, the "gist" or core of the essay. The goal is to condense the argument and evidence, while remaining faithful to the author's meaning. Your summary will be useful when you discuss the essay in class or write about it in a paper. For some genres, including the scientific report, a summary or *abstract* is included in the essay itself (see p. 976 for an example).

Keep a reading journal

Buy a class notebook or designate a special section of your college notebook for reflections on the essays you read. For each essay, take notes, record your responses, write questions about what puzzles you and what you want to discuss in class. Write down sentences or passages that you like and that you might want to use as models for your own essays. You may also want to list questions that the essayist raises and answers, as well as write down questions that you think the essayist has overlooked.

Use the study questions

Review the questions that follow each essay in *The Norton Reader*, and think about the issues—the subject, the structure, the language—that they pose. We include these questions to help you become an active reader, to focus attention on key issues, and sometimes to make suggestions for *doing* or *writing* something.

- Some questions ask you to locate or mark the essays' structural features, the patterns that undergird and clarify meaning. Narrative, description, exposition, persuasion, and argument follow conventional shapes—or distort them—and your ability to recognize these shapes will improve your comprehension.
- Other questions ask you to paraphrase meanings or extend them—that is, to express the meaning in your own words, to amplify points by providing your own examples, or to reframe points by connecting them with points in other essays.
- Still other questions ask you to notice special features or conventions that contribute to meaning: the author's choice of title, the author's voice (or persona), the author's assumptions about audience (and how the author speaks to the audience), and the author's choice of style and forms of expression.

■ At least one question, usually the last, asks you to write. Sometimes we ask you to demonstrate comprehension by writing about something from your experience or reading that extends an essay and enforces its argument. Sometimes, we invite you to express disagreement or dissent by writing about something from your experience or knowledge that qualifies the author's argument or calls it into question. The final question may ask you to compare or contrast two authors' positions—especially when their positions seem opposed. Or we may ask you to adapt one of the essay's rhetorical strategies to a topic of your own choice and to make the essay even more your own by basing it on personal experience.

Re-read the essay

If possible, read the essay a second time before you discuss it in class. If you're short on time, re-read the key passages and paragraphs that you marked in marginal notes. Ask yourself what you see the second time that you didn't register on first reading.

As these tactics suggest, reading need not be only a private activity; it can also become communal and cooperative. Sharing reading journals in class helps to reveal points of ambiguity and to generate debate. Discussion, with the whole class or in smaller groups, can clarify your own and others' interpretation of the essays. What interests and motives does each reader bring to particular essays? Do some interests and motives yield better readings than others? What meanings do readers agree about? What meanings do they disagree about? Can we account for our differences? What are responsive and responsible readings? Are there irresponsible readings, and how do we decide? All these questions—and others—can emerge as private reading moves into the more public arena of the classroom.

Readers write, writers read. Making meaning by writing is the flip side of making it by reading, and we hope to engage you in both processes. But in neither process are meanings passed from hand to hand like nickels, dimes, and quarters. Instead, they are constructed—as a quilt or a house or an institution. We hope that these suggestions for reading will lead you to engaged and fruitful writing.

Writing in College

Much of the writing you will do in a composition course will start with an assignment from your instructor. Perhaps you will be asked to respond to some of the essays in *The Norton Reader*—to expand on something a writer has said, to agree or disagree with a claim a writer has made, or to do some research to extend an author's argument and say something new about it. Or, you may be assigned a particular genre or kind of writing—a literacy narrative, a profile of a person or place, a visual or textual analysis, or an argumentative paper—and asked to use selections in this book as models of these kinds of writing. We have selected the readings because they are full of important ideas you can react to, either by agreeing or disagreeing, and also because the essays represent excellent examples of good writers at their best, models for aspiring writers to follow.

What follows is a brief guide for writing with *The Norton Reader*. We'll look at discovering your purpose, addressing your audience, finding a subject, determining what genre to employ, using rhetorical strategies, and understanding the writing process.

KNOWING YOUR PURPOSE

Your *purpose* is, put simply, the goal for your writing. What do you want to achieve? What points do you want to make? What idea or cause motivates you to write? Anything you can do to sharpen your thinking and infuse your writing with a clear sense of purpose will be to the good: you will find it easier to stay focused and help your readers see your key point and main ideas about your subject.

What are some common purposes writers have? The authors of the essays in *The Norton Reader* had informing, persuading, entertaining, or expressing as some of their purposes. So, too, your writing will have a primary purpose, usually defined in an assignment by words such as “explain,” “describe,” “analyze,” “argue.” Each is a signal about the purpose for your writing.

For instance, if an assignment asks you to *analyze* the persuasiveness of Nicholas Kristof's Op-Ed “Saudiis in Bikinis” (p. 340), then your purpose is to explain the claims Kristof makes, examine the evidence he uses to support them, discuss points or perspectives he misses, and develop a thesis about the reasons for the essay's persuasiveness. If an assignment asks you to *argue* for or against Kristof's claim about women in Saudi Arabia, then your purpose is to take a side, defending or refuting his claims and using evidence from your own knowledge and from reputable sources to support your argument.

Use these questions to think about your purpose for writing:

- What does the assignment ask you to do? Is the goal to inform readers, entertain them, argue a point, or express an idea or feeling? Beyond a general purpose, what does the assignment require in terms of a specific purpose?

- How does your purpose affect your choice of a subject? What do you know about the subject? How can you find out more about this subject?
- How can you connect to your readers? What will they want or need to know? How do you want them to respond to your writing?

ADDRESSING YOUR AUDIENCE

Just as the authors in *The Norton Reader* aimed their essays at different *audiences*—readers of books, large newspapers, magazines, small journals, and scholarly publications, as well as activists, ordinary citizens, and churchgoers—so you need to imagine your audience as you write. Too wide an audience—“the general public”—and you run the risk of making your essay too diffuse, trying to reach everyone. Too narrow an audience—“my roommate Zach”—and you run the risk of being too specific.

How can you imagine an audience of your own? One way is to look around your writing classroom: that's your immediate audience, the people who are taking the course with you and your instructor. Another way is to think about your home community: your family, your neighbors, and the people of your town or city. Think of your audience as readers like yourself, with some of the same knowledge of the world and some of the same tastes. Consider your audience's range of reference: historical events they have witnessed first-hand, movies and TV shows they know about or have seen, and the books they have read or heard of. Think of them as willing to be convinced by whatever you write, but in need of good evidence.

Inevitably, some writers find that imagining an audience made only of class members seems too restrictive. That's fine; feel free to invoke another audience, say a group of people who share a certain passion, perhaps for a team, a sport, a game, or a type of music or film. (But remember to take into account your instructor, who may need some filling in about the special knowledge you share with your audience.)

Use these questions to guide you in thinking about audience:

- What readers are you hoping to reach with your writing?
- What information can you assume your readers know? What information do you need to explain?
- In what ways will you need to adjust the style of your writing—the language, tone, sentence structure and complexity, and examples—to meet the needs of your audience?

FINDING A SUBJECT

Like the audience and purpose for your writing, the *subject* of your writing—what you write about—will often be assigned by your instructor. Some assignments are very specific, such as this study question following Virginia Woolf's essay “My Father. Leslie Stephen” (p. 137): “Write a sketch about a father, real or fictional, adopting a tone similar to Woolf's in this sketch.” In this case,

signment the subject matter (a father), the genre (a biographical sketch), and even the tone (“similar to Woolf’s”) are prescribed. You’ll have to use Woolf’s essay as a model and try to capture her tone as best you can. Other assignments may be more general, such as the following study question on Scott Russell Sanders’s profile of his father, “Under the Influence” (p. 121): “Drawing on your memories of a friend or family member, write an essay about some problem that person had and its effect on your life.” This broader assignment requires you to determine the person you wish to discuss, the problem you wish to analyze, and the larger effect the person and problem had on your life.

Some assignments give you even more leeway in choosing a subject, leaving you with the inevitable question “What should I write about?” In this case, write about what you know or care about, drawing on knowledge you’ve already gleaned about a subject from personal experience, your reading, or research. Your knowledge does not have to be totally new, but your perspective on a subject needs to come from you—a real person writing about a subject that matters.

How do you find what you know or care about? One way is to raise questions about an essay you’ve read:

- What is the author’s main point? Do you agree or disagree with the main point?
- Has the author said enough about the subject? What gaps or omissions do you see, if any? Are there sentences or paragraphs that you could expand into an essay of your own?
- Are the author’s examples and evidence convincing? If not, why not? Can you provide a more compelling example, additional evidence, or a counter example?
- Does this reading “speak” to anything else you’ve read in *The Norton Reader*? Can you explain how this reading connects to the other? Do the readings agree or disagree?
- Is this reading true to your own experience? Has anything like this happened to you, or have you ever observed anything like this?

You can also choose a subject by reflecting on your own experience:

- Has someone you know affected your life in some way—by teaching you, by serving as an example (good or bad), or by changing your attitude?
- Is there a place that you can describe to others, telling them what makes it unique or special to you?
- Is there a subject you feel strongly about, something you believe others need to learn about—for example, a program on your campus or in your neighborhood, a controversial item of national significance, or a matter of global importance?

- Have you had an experience that has taught you something valuable, influenced the way you live, or made you think differently about life, school, work, family, or friends? Readers will be interested in the details of the experience, including how it affected you and what you have learned.

DETERMINING GENRE

Like the purpose, audience, and subject of your writing, the *genre* or form of your writing may be prescribed in your instructor’s assignment. *The Norton Reader* contains a variety of essay genres:

- **Narrative genres**, which tell stories and include autobiographical essays, literacy narratives, historical narratives, and biographical narratives.
- **Descriptive genres**, which give details about how a person, place, or thing looks, sounds, and feels, often in a larger framework. These include profiles of people and places and essays about nature and natural history.
- **Analytic genres**, which examine texts, images, and cultural objects and trends.
- **Argumentative genres**, which take stands and provide evidence to support them. These include Op-Eds, editorials, public speeches, and parables.

These genres are discussed on pp. xxvii–xxxvii and listed in the Genres Index on pp. 1259–62.

If you’re assigned a literacy narrative, for example, your writing will tell a vivid, detailed story about an experience you’ve had with reading, writing, or schooling. To write a profile of a place, you will need to give a coherent impression of it by gathering and organizing detailed descriptions of how the place looks, smells, or even feels. If you’re asked to take a stand on an important issue, you will write in an argumentative genre; if you choose an Op-Ed or editorial, you will need to focus on a central claim, support that claim with solid evidence, consider opposing views, and be brief. Or, if your assignment is a textual analysis of one of the readings in this book, you will need to examine features of the essay—its structure, style, key metaphors and phrases—paying close attention to rhetorical details.

If you have some leeway in choosing the genre in which you will write, consider what genre best fits your purpose, audience, and subject:

- What goal do you have for your writing? What genre is most appropriate for that goal?
- Who will read your writing? What genre will best convey the point of your writing to your readers?
- What are you writing about? What genre is well-suited to your subject?

To gain more understanding of these genres, read plenty of examples, analyze the forms and strategies they use, and then try out a genre on your own. There's no better way to understand how a genre works than to try your hand at writing it.

USING RHETORICAL STRATEGIES

As you plan your essay, you will want to think about the *rhetorical strategies* by which you will present your ideas and evidence to readers. These strategies, sometimes called *rhetorical modes* or *techniques*, help a writer organize evidence, connect facts into a sequence, and provide clusters of information necessary for conveying a purpose or an argument. You might choose to *analyze* the cause of an outcome, *compare* one thing to another, *classify* your facts into categories, *define* a key term, *describe* a person, place, or phenomenon, *explain* how a process works, or *narrate* a pertinent event or experience.

Sometimes, the writing assignment that your instructor gives will determine the strategy: for example, an assignment to compare Jack Hitt's position on binge drinking with Kenneth Bruffee's (see pp. 422–25) will require that you use a compare/contrast strategy. Similarly, a study question in this book might imply a strategy: for example, one of the questions following E. B. White's "Democracy" (p. 891) states, "Using White's technique, write a definition for an abstract term," and thus asks that you think about definition and how that strategy might work in an essay about "generosity" or "love" or "virtue."

Many essays use a mix of strategies. You might want to define a key term in an opening paragraph, narrate a story to make a point in the next paragraph, and analyze cause and effect in yet another. Except for very short pieces, most writers use several rhetorical strategies in an essay, choosing the one they think best fits their material. In "The Tyranny of the Majority" (p. 886), Lani Guinier uses a childhood story in her opening paragraph—an episode in which a girl in her Brownie troop wins a contest by having her mother make her entry. Guinier then follows this example of foul play with a definition of "fair play": "To me fair play means that the rules encourage everyone to play. They should reward those who win, but they must be acceptable to those who lose." Later she compares different ways of conceptualizing democracy, some that take only winners into account, others that allow the views of the minority to be included. The mix of rhetorical strategies keeps the reader involved, shows that the writer is engaged in complex thinking, and creates an effective argument.

Following are some rhetorical strategies that you will encounter in *The Norton Reader* and that you will want to use in your own writing.

Analyzing cause and effect

Focusing on causes helps a writer think about why something happened; focusing on effects helps a writer think about what might or could happen.

Cause is oriented toward the future; effect looks back to the past. But you can use this strategy by working in either direction: from present to future, or from present to the past.

If you were writing about global warming and intending to show its harmful effects, you might lay out your evidence in this sequence:

Cause → leads to → these effects.

If you were writing about binge drinking and trying to identify the reasons for its rise among college students, you might reverse the direction:

Effect ← is the result of ← these causes.

Analyzing a cause (or causes) is a crucial strategy for genres such as cultural critique, Op-Ed, and historical narrative. But you can also use it in an autobiographical essay, where you might analyze the effects of a childhood trauma on your later life, or in a profile of a person, where you might seek the sources (the causes) of the person's adult personality or achievements.

Comparing and contrasting

Comparisons look for similarities between things; contrasts look for differences. In most uses of this rhetorical strategy, you will want to consider both similarities and differences—that is, you will want to compare *and* contrast. That's because most things worth comparing have something in common, even if they also have significant differences. You may end up finding more similarities than differences, or vice versa, but when using this strategy, think about both.

Comparison-contrast may be used for a single paragraph or for an entire essay. It tends to be set up in one of two ways: block or point-by-point. In the block technique, the writer gives all the information about one item and then follows with all the information about the other. Think of it as giving all the A's, then all the B's. Usually, the order of the information is the same for both. In the point-by-point technique, the writer focuses on specific points of comparison, alternating A, B, A, B, A, B, and so on until the main points have been covered.

Comparing and contrasting is an excellent strategy to use in writing a report, making an argument in an Op-Ed, or giving a speech to persuade your audience to take a specific course of action. You can set forth the pros and cons of different programs, political policies, or courses of action, leading up to the recommendation you endorse and believe is the more effective.

Classifying and dividing

Classifying and dividing involves either putting things into groups or dividing up a large block into smaller units. While this strategy might seem better suited to a biology lab than to a writing class, in fact it works well for organiz-

ing facts that seem chaotic or for handling big topics that at first glance seem overwhelming. Classifying and dividing allow the writer—and the reader—to get control of a big topic and break it into smaller units of analysis.

How does the essayist Susan Allan Toth discuss ways of “Going to the Movies” (p. 1105)? She classifies movies by the kinds of men who accompany her and who have different tastes in what they like to see. This technique gives the essayist four manageable categories: art films, movies with “a redeeming social conscience,” movies that entertain, and romantic oldies that she watches on her own. In other words, Toth is classifying. How does the composer Aaron Copland discuss “How We Listen” (p. 1121)? He divides his essay—and the modes of listening to music—into three “planes” or levels of listening. This basic division helps the writer explain the different goals and experiences that listeners bring to a piece of music. Dividing goals into levels allows the writer to manage a difficult, abstract topic and to lead the reader from the simpler to the more complex level of listening.

You will find that classifying and dividing is helpful in writing all genres of analysis: textual, visual, and cultural. You will also find that it can help in argumentative genres because it enables you, as a writer or speaker, to break down a complex argument into parts or to group pieces of evidence into similar categories.

Defining

Defining involves telling your reader what something means—and what it does not. It involves saying what something is—and what it is not. As a strategy, defining means making sure you—and your readers—understand what you mean by a key term. It may mean re-defining a common term to have a more precise meaning or giving nuance to a term that is commonly used too broadly. Defining and re-defining are great strategies to use in argumentative writing; they help the writer reshape the thinking of the audience and see a concept in a new light.

This rhetorical strategy is not as simple as looking up a word in a dictionary, though often that is a good place to begin. If you look up your key word in a good collegiate dictionary, you may discover that it meant something one hundred years ago that it no longer means, or that it is used in technical writing in a specific sense, or that it has a range of meanings from which you must choose to convey *your* intention. Citing one of these definitions can help in composing your essay. But defining as a rhetorical strategy may also include giving examples or providing descriptions: What does *democracy* feel like to the citizen? (See E. B. White’s “Democracy,” p. 891.) What does *salvation* look like to the unconverted? (See Langston Hughes’s “Salvation,” p. 1139.) What is a *postcard* in a literary sense? (See Garrison Keillor’s “Postcards,” p. 537.) In these versions of defining, the rhetorical strategy overlaps with the next one: describing.

Describing

When writers describe a person, place, or thing, they indicate what it looks like and often how it feels, smells, sounds, or tastes. As a strategy, describing involves showing rather than telling, helping readers see rather than giving them a formal definition, making the subject come alive rather than remaining abstract. When you describe, you want to choose precise verbs, specific nouns, vivid adjectives—unless your subject is dullness itself.

As a writer, you will use description in many kinds of assignments: in profiles of people and places to provide a key to their essence, in visual analysis to reveal the crucial features of a painting or photograph, in cultural critique to highlight the features of the object or phenomenon you will analyze, and in scientific lab reports to give details of an experiment. Almost no essay can be written without at least some description, and many essays rely on this strategy as a fundamental technique. In *The Norton Reader* you will find study questions in almost every section that begin with “Describe”: “Describe a ‘treasure’ someone found and held on to,” “Take a flower or tree and write a close-up description of it,” “Describe some particular experience that raises a large social question”—these are just a few examples of writing assignments that ask for description.

Explaining a process

With this rhetorical strategy, the writer explains how something is done: from everyday processes like how to write a letter, how to play basketball, or how to make French fries, to unusual or extreme processes like how to embalm a corpse or how to face death. Sometimes, writers use this strategy in historical essays to show how something was done in the past. As these examples suggest, explaining a process can be useful in a range of genres: from a literacy narrative that explains learning to read, to a cultural analysis that treats the funeral industry, to a sermon or philosophical essay that explores the meaning and purpose of death and dying.

To make a process accessible to the reader, you will need to identify the main steps or stages and then explain them in order, one after the other. Sequence matters. In preparing to write a paragraph explaining a process, it might help to list the steps as a flow chart or as a cookbook recipe—and then turn your list into a paragraph (or more) of fully elaborated prose.

Narrating

This final rhetorical strategy—narrating—may be the most fundamental. We tell stories about ourselves, about our families, and about friends and neighbors. We tell stories to make a point, to illustrate an argument, to offer evidence or counter-evidence, and sometimes even to substitute for an argument. As these uses suggest, narrating appears in many genres: from memoirs and

biographies, to Op-Eds, formal speeches, and parables. Narrating is basic to essay writing.

As you plan a paragraph or segment of narration, think about sequence: the order in which the events occurred (chronological order) or an order in which the events might be most dramatically presented (reverse chronological order or the present moment with flashback). Often, sequential order is easier for the reader to comprehend, but sometimes beginning *in medias res* (at the present moment *in the middle of things*) and then flashing back to the past creates a more compelling story. Consider incorporating time markers—not only dates, but also sequential phrases: early one evening, later that night, the next morning. And use transitional and transitional words: first, then, meanwhile, later, finally. When you've finished narrating your event or episode, re-read it and ask, What have I left out that the reader needs to know? What might I omit because the reader doesn't need to know it?

STRATEGIES FOR WRITING

If you were to watch a writer at work, you would observe that the task of writing often occurs in stages. Most writers generate ideas, write a draft, revise the draft (sometimes once, often many times), edit (make sentence- or word-level changes), and finally, proofread (check to see that the grammar, spelling, and formatting are correct). Along the way, writers develop a main point for their writing, find examples and evidence to support that point, and integrate the evidence into their work. You would be observing what teachers of writing call the *writing process*, a series of stages that writers use, though some omit a stage, some combine one or more of them, and others follow each one carefully. Your writing will benefit if you understand how the writing process works, and, even more important, how to make the process work for you.

Generate ideas

For many people, the hardest part of writing is looking at the blank page or empty screen. What can you say? How can you even get started? Sometimes your task is made easier when your instructor gives you a specific assignment or asks a particular question. In the next pages, we'll follow one student as she develops an essay responding to Brent Staples's "Why Colleges Shower Their Students with A's." Her instructor assigned the following study question (p. 410):

How broad is Staples's range of examples? Would he need to adjust his position if he considered other colleges? Write an analysis of the situation at your college either to confirm or to contest Staples's argument.

The student knew she had to analyze Staples's range of examples and so began gathering ideas by rereading his essay. She noted that he cites only three colleges by name—the University of Pennsylvania, the University of Phoenix, and Duke University—and decided to do research on her own cam-

pus. Her instructor directed her to the Office of Institutional Research, which supplied her with a summary of grade distribution at her college. The summary showed that 30 percent of grades were A's, 45 percent were B's, and 25 percent were C's or below. The evidence her research produced did not seem particularly odd to her; it was about what she expected, and it refuted Staples's claim that "colleges shower their students with A's." Notice this student's process for generating ideas and getting started: she began with the question in *The Norton Reader*, reread the essay, conducted research, and discovered hard evidence that did not support Staples's claim. In fact, she developed a claim of her own, a counterclaim to Staples's.

Sometimes, the assignment your teacher gives or a study question in *The Norton Reader* is more open-ended, such as this one following Nancy Mairs's "On Being a Cripple" (p. 59):

Mairs deliberately chooses to call herself a "cripple." Select a person or group that deliberately chooses its own name or description and explain the rationale behind the choice.

You can respond to this assignment by examining your own memory for stories you've heard, incidents you've witnessed, or people you've met, or you may need to do some research in order to have enough to say. Use one or more of the following techniques to mine your memory or generate ideas:

- Freewrite for several minutes to discover what you already know and think about a subject.
- Make a list of everything you know about the subject. Group or cluster related ideas.
- Read some articles about the subject. Take notes on what you read.
- Ask questions about the subject, starting with *who*, *what*, *when*, *why*, and *how*.

Different writers develop different ways of finding their material, so experiment with different techniques until you discover one or more that work for you.

Develop a main point or thesis

Most writing in college courses needs a central claim, often called a *thesis*. Most papers contain a thesis statement, often stated in the introduction, that tells readers the main point that will be supported, developed, and extended in the body of the paper.

Sometimes the thesis statement will be an arguable claim supported by evidence, such as Brent Staples's thesis, which falls at the end of the first paragraph of his Op-Ed: "Faced with demanding consumers and stiff competition, colleges have simply issued more and more A's, stoking grade inflation and devaluating degrees." The student who responded to Staples's essay also

developed a thesis statement, narrowing a broad initial claim—"Staples is wrong about colleges showering their students with A's"—to a specific, arguable claim—"For most students at Central College, however, Staples is wrong: 70 percent of students on this campus are not being showered with A's." Her thesis statement is good because it emerges from the research she has carried out on her own campus.

At other times, the main point of your writing won't be stated so plainly. Instead, it will be "in the air," or evident to the reader, but you won't be trying to argue a claim with evidence. If you're writing in a narrative or descriptive genre, for example, you'll have a main point, of course, particularly if you're writing a historical or biographical narrative or creating a profile of a person or place. You will make a claim about the reasons something happened or about the reasons for a person's or place's distinctive characteristics, as Margaret Atwood does in "True North" (p. 199):

The north is another country. It's also another language. Or languages.

Those three sentences are main point, the guiding principle by which she thinks about the Canadian north.

Gather evidence

What counts as adequate evidence for your claim or thesis? The student whose response to Brent Staples's "Why Colleges Shower Students with A's" was not convinced by the evidence Staples used and found evidence that refuted his claim. Her argument would have been even stronger if she had looked for other sources, such as published survey results and reports of grade distribution at other colleges, to find out whether Staples's claim or her hunch was more accurate.

In other kinds of writing, evidence is drawn more often from personal experience than from secondary sources. In a literacy narrative, for example, the evidence will be in the examples and details of the story you tell about a formative time in your education. In a profile of a person, the evidence will also take the form of examples—the descriptive details about the person's personality, accomplishments, talents, weaknesses, looks, and behavior; anecdotes or stories about the person's life; or testimony from people who've observed the person closely. Evidence is also often drawn directly from reading. In a textual analysis, the evidence will be examples that demonstrate the text's structure, style, and language.

Organize your ideas

How you organize your ideas in a piece of writing depends to a large extent on your genre and purpose. Margaret Atwood organizes "True North" as a journey to the north, inching us there by describing her impressions of a trip, using the historical present tense ("A bunch of us are sitting around the table, at what

is now a summer cottage in Georgian Bay"), and pausing occasionally to fill us in on what happens at different times, thus linking her impressions together loosely in her narrative. Similarly, David Guterson organizes "Enclosed, Encyclopedic, Endured: The Mall of America" (p. 210) as an answer to a question:

Here was a new structure that had cost more than half a billion dollars to erect—what might it tell us about ourselves?

His essay proceeds as a narrative exploration of the Mall itself, over a number of days; he links his observations to stops he makes on his trip through the complex.

For many of the essays you write in college, you will use the familiar format of an introduction, body, and conclusion, with separate paragraphs in the body for each major piece of evidence. The introduction often connects your ideas to what your readers already know and seeks to interest them in what you have to say. For instance, the student writing in response to Brent Staples's "Op-Ed" began her essay this way:

The notion of grade inflation has been in the air for the past decade. Critics have complained that today's students are receiving far too many A's and not enough C's, D's, and F's. Things were different in the past, these critics say; grades really meant something back when the critics went to college; today's college students have it far too easy. In his recent Op-Ed piece, Brent Staples struck the familiar theme when he claimed to explain why colleges nowadays "shower" their students with A's. For most students at Central College, however, Staples is wrong: 70 percent of students on this campus are not being showered with A's.

In the body of an essay, you may want to place your most compelling piece of evidence first, or you may want it to come last to tie matters up for the reader. (But don't hide your best bit of evidence by placing it in the middle.) The student who wrote in response to Staples decided to use the body of her essay to present anecdotal evidence from her roommates, informal survey results from classmates about their grades, and finally the results of her research at the Office of Institutional Research. Whatever type of organization you choose, try the ideas out and write a different outline for each type of placement to see which works more successfully.

In the conclusion, you try to wrap things up, finish off your line of reasoning, and send your readers off with a final thought. Brent Staples ends "Why Colleges Shower Their Students with A's" with a predication:

Addicted to counterfeit excellence, colleges, parents and students are unlikely to give it up. As a consequence, diplomas will become weaker and more ornamental as the years go by.

That's a fine way to conclude. Our student writer, responding to Staples, takes a different approach in her conclusion:

Those of us who work hard and study at Central College note that we have never been "showered" with A's. We study at a place where high grades re-

main difficult to earn, and our situation makes me wonder whether Staples gathered only the evidence he wanted to find. Had he considered other colleges, he would not have made such a sweeping assertion.

Write multiple drafts

Even the most experienced writers know they can't do everything at once: find or invent material, assess its usefulness, arrange it in paragraphs, and write it out in well-formed sentences. If you try to produce a good essay at one sitting, in a single draft, you are likely to thin out your material, lock yourself into a structure that may not work and that you don't have time to change, and write jumbled paragraphs and clumsy sentences that won't fully convey your meaning or intention. In the end, writing a few drafts—in short periods spaced over more than a day—will produce a better essay, one that is thoughtful and deserving of a respectable grade. Here are some tips for drafting in stages:

- Get started by composing a rough draft or small sections of a draft. Don't feel obliged to start with the introduction and write straight through to the conclusion. If you don't know where to begin, write a section you know you want to include, then move to another. As you compose, you will begin to find out what you mean, what is important to your argument, what is missing, and what needs to be revised. Think of composing a rough draft as a way of discovering what you want to say.
- If you get stuck, try focused freewriting. That is, write all you can in response to a particular point or about a particular idea, not stopping for five minutes. After you're done, read what you've written looking for your thoughts on the subject. Much of what you've written won't be worthwhile, but you may have come up with key notions or put yourself in touch with useful ideas.
- Write a single paragraph for each key piece of evidence you have to support your thesis. Later on you can refine these paragraphs, combining some and breaking up others.
- At any point in this process, print out a clean version of your draft, read it through, and make changes. Add to, subtract from, rearrange, and revise the parts of your essay.

Acknowledge others' words and ideas

Your writing should reflect your own thinking, of course, but you'll often incorporate the ideas and actual words of others. Synthesizing and citing the work of others shows your readers that you have consulted reputable sources and, if you use sources honestly and skillfully, will make readers more open to your argument. It may help you to think of anything you write as part of a dialogue you are having with other writers and scholars; just be sure to credit the other writers and scholars whose words and ideas you borrow, so your readers can follow the dialogue and know who said what.

When you cite information from another source in your writing, you must credit the source. First, give the author credit by acknowledging his or her work in your text. If you cite someone's exact words, put them in quotation marks, or, if you quote more than five lines, indent them without quotation marks. Tell your readers where you got the words by including the author's name in your text and putting the page number of the book or article in parentheses right after the quote. Here is an example of a direct quotation with appropriate citation:

Staples argues that the rise of part-time instructors is partially responsible for grade inflation: "Writing in the last issue of *Academe*, two part-timers suggest that students routinely corner adjuncts, threatening to complain if they do not turn C's into A's" (411).

If you paraphrase a source, that is, if you use another person's idea but not the exact words, you still need to cite the source of that idea, even though you have expressed it in your own words. Here is an example of a paraphrase:

Staples dismisses the argument that grades are getting higher because of students' better preparation (411).

At the end of your paper on a separate page, list all the sources you have quoted and paraphrased. Many style guides provide directions for formatting source material. The guide used most frequently in English classes is the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, Seventh Edition (2009), published by the Modern Language Association.

Sometimes writers in a hurry are tempted to absorb others' writing wholesale into their papers. This is *plagiarism*. Plagiarism is unethical because it involves the theft of another writer's words and ideas; in college courses, it is a guarantee of failure when discovered. Avoid plagiarizing at all costs. If you have fallen behind on a writing assignment, tell your instructor. You will often find that he or she will accept a late submission, and even if you are graded down for submitting the paper late, that is better than stealing others' ideas and words.

Revise alone and with peers

Although writers can and often do compose and revise alone, we all need helpful responses, whether from professional editors, classmates, or friends. You, too, will need to become a good reviser, both of your own work and of the work of your peers. It is useful first to internalize another reader for yourself and revise your work on your own, and then to give your draft to an actual reader who can read and comment on it.

All writers need to try out their arguments and ideas before they produce a final draft. Many writing classes encourage that process, teaching students to draft and revise independently but also enabling them to put less-than-final drafts forward for responses from the instructor and fellow students. Examples and arguments that seem clear to the writer may seem forced or exaggerated to another reader. In peer groups, listen to readers who disagree with you who

find your position slanted, overstated, or not fully convincing. Be responsive to their comments, and qualify interpretations or further explain points that they do not understand.

Here are some all-purpose questions that you can use to review a draft on your own or in a peer group. The questions should probably be asked in the order below, since they move from larger elements to smaller ones.

Introduction Treat the introduction as a promise by asking, "Does this essay keep the promises the introduction makes?" If it doesn't, either the introduction or the essay needs to be revised. Try to determine where the problem lies: Is the introduction off track? Does one or more of the paragraphs wander off the topic? Does the introduction promise an organization that isn't followed?

Content Next ask yourself, "Does this essay include enough material?" You may feel that some of the essays in *The Norton Reader* are dense and overspecific; your instructor, on the other hand, may find your essays skimpy and underspecific, with too few details and examples. As you read your own work and that of your classmates, look for examples and details that transmit meaning and engage your interest, understanding, and imagination. Check for adequate and persuasive evidence and multiple illustrative examples that clarify main points. If you or your readers think you need more evidence, examples, or information, revise accordingly.

Evidence and source material Then ask, "Does the essay interpret its material clearly and connect its examples to the main argument?" Your essay, and those you read as a peer reviewer, should specify the meanings of the examples you use; don't expect the examples to speak for themselves. A case in point is the use of quotations. How many are there? How necessary are they? How well are they integrated? What analysis or commentary follows each? Watch for quotations that are simply dropped in, without enough introduction or "placing" so that the reader can understand their significance. Quotations should be well integrated, clearly explaining who is speaking, where the voice is coming from, and what to attend to.

Organization and transitions Then ask, "Are the main and supporting points of this essay well-organized?" Writing puts readers in possession of material in a temporal order: that is, readers read from start to finish. Sometimes material that appears near the end of an essay might work better near the beginning; sometimes material that appears near the beginning might better be postponed. Pay attention to transitions between and within paragraphs; if they are unclear, the difficulty may lie in the organization of the material.

Tone Then ask, "Is the tone of the essay appropriate for its purpose and its audience?" Whether the tone is light-hearted, serious, reasoned, funny, enraged, thoughtful, or anything else, it needs to be appropriate to the purpose

of the essay and sensitive to the expectations of the audience. Be aware of how formal your writing should be and whether contractions, abbreviations, and slang are acceptable.

Sentences Then ask, "Which sentences unfold smoothly and which sentences might cause readers to stumble?" If working in a group, ask your classmates to help you rephrase a sentence or write the thought in new words. Remember, you're trying to reach readers just like your peers, so take their questions and reactions seriously.

Learning to be a responsive reader of essays in *The Norton Reader* can teach you to respond helpfully to the essays of peer writers in your composition class—and to improve your own. Large and small elements of the composing process are reciprocal. Learn to work back and forth among wholes and parts, sections and paragraphs, introductions and conclusions. As shape and meaning come together, you can begin to refine smaller elements: sentences, phrases, specific words. You can qualify your assertions, complicate your generalizations, and tease out the implications of your examples.

Edit, proofread, and format the final draft

After you have revised the structure of your writing, you should devote time to pruning for excess, reviewing the words, and correcting errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling—what experienced writers call editing and proofreading. This work is best done after giving the paper a rest and coming to it afresh. You may be tempted to move directly to the proofreading stage, thus shortchanging the larger, more important revision work described above. So long as the larger elements of an essay need repair, it's too soon to work on the smaller ones, so save the tinkering for last. When you're satisfied with the overall shape of your essay, turn to the work of tightening your writing by eliminating repetition and awkward phrases, correcting grammar, punctuation, and spelling, and putting your work in its final form. Be sure you know what style and format your work should take, be it that of an academic paper with set margins, double-spacing, and a title page, or some other format. Ask your instructor if you are unsure about any of these, and make the necessary changes. Then, like other writers, you will need to stop—not because there isn't more to be done but because you have other things to do.