

inability to read and write adequately.²⁷ Do you think such a suit is reasonable? What factors would you consider if you were responsible for judging its merits?

3.10 It is common for high school coaches to forbid their players to drink alcohol. If a coach has such a rule and catches a player drinking, is it reasonable for the coach to dismiss the player from the team for the rest of the season? Should the coach treat the team's star player differently from a bench-warmer?

3.11 Apparently, a sizable number of Americans believe in astrology and think the stars govern their lives. How reasonable is this view? Explain your thinking.

3.12 Some years ago a San Francisco publisher paid two Jewish businesspeople \$1,500 in an out-of-court settlement. Their lawsuit had charged him with discriminatory business practices. He published the *Christian Yellow Pages*, a directory of businesses operated by born-again Christians. (The publisher required advertisers to sign a pledge that they accepted Jesus as their savior.)²⁸ Do you believe the publisher was guilty of discrimination? Explain.

3.13 A minister in Pontiac, Michigan, was arrested and charged with practicing medicine without a license—a felony—after he sprinkled blood from a freshly killed rooster on an ailing person. The minister said the authorities were stifling his constitutional rights. Do you agree with him? Explain your position.²⁹



COMPOSITION OR SPEECH EXERCISE

Should the Boy Scouts have a right to exclude homosexuals? James Dale, an Eagle Scout, was an assistant scoutmaster when a newspaper photo identified him as the leader of a gay rights group at Rutgers University. The Scouts promptly expelled him, claiming that his homosexuality violated the scouting ideal of “clean” and “morally straight” behavior. Dale took the matter to court, claiming discrimination. The Boy Scouts argued that, as a private association, they have a right to set their own membership standards. In 1999 New Jersey's Supreme Court found for James Dale. The Boy Scouts have stated their intention of appealing the decision to the Supreme Court.

Examine this case, noting the specific arguments made by each side. Sample, too, the views expressed by legal authorities following the decision. Then apply the thinking strategies you have learned in this and the previous chapter, decide whether you agree with the New Jersey Supreme Court's decision, and present your view in a composition or a speech, as your instructor specifies.

Be a Critical Reader

You may be thinking, “This chapter doesn't apply to me. I read pretty fast and have excellent comprehension.” But this chapter isn't about reading faster or merely understanding what you read. It is about deciding whether to accept or reject what the author says. Chances are you haven't had much training in this important aspect of reading.

In this chapter you'll learn a five-step strategy for critical reading. You'll also receive tips for making important distinctions as you read.

Not long ago, while searching the Internet, I encountered a reference to an article describing “Pepper Power Bear Spray,” which was created by a survivor of a grizzly bear attack for defense against bears, lions, and moose. The manufacturer promises “quick access and potent stopping power.” If I were going camping in the deep woods, I thought to myself, I'd certainly feel safer if I had a good supply of that product.

Then my glance fell on the *very next* response to my search request. It read “Bears attracted to repellent, researcher says.” My curiosity aroused, I read the news article. It seems that though pepper spray can indeed stop a charging bear if sprayed in its face, it has the *opposite* effect if sprayed on clothing, camping equipment, or the ground around a campsite. A camper who sprayed it around

his tent was soon surrounded by a bunch of brown bears. A pilot who sprayed it on his plane's pontoons returned to find them chewed up.

The lesson in that experience was don't believe everything you read in newspapers, books, magazines, or on the Internet. Unfortunately, many people have never learned this lesson. They erroneously assume that if something is published, it must be true. In reality, even honest, well-intentioned writers make mistakes; imperfection is an unavoidable part of being human.

The consequences of being misinformed by the printed word are not always as dramatic as being visited by a family of wild and presumably hungry bears, but they are no less real. Every day people undermine their health, make disastrous investments or career moves, or harm their marriages by uncritically accepting something they've read. The best safeguard against such misfortunes is to develop the habit of *critical reading*.

Critical Reading Defined

Critical reading* is active, thoughtful reading, as opposed to passively accepting whatever appears on the printed page. Critical readers *evaluate* what they read, and their standard of judgment is not how closely the author's view matches their own, but whether it is accurate and reasonable. Consequently, critical readers are less vulnerable to deception and manipulation than other people.

Our age is not the first to realize the importance of critical reading. Almost 400 years ago, Francis Bacon warned about the danger of reading improperly. He advised people not to dispute an author's view nor to accept it uncritically, but to "weigh and consider" it. In the nineteenth century, British statesman Edmund Burke expressed the same view in more dramatic terms: "To read without reflection is like eating without digesting." The following explanation by a twentieth-century scholar expands on this idea:

There is one key idea which contains, in itself, the very essence of effective reading, and on which the improvement of reading depends: *Reading is reasoning*. When you read properly, you are not merely assimilating. You are not automatically transferring into your head what your eyes pick up on the page. What you see on the page sets your mind at work, collating, criticizing, interpreting, questioning, comprehending, comparing. When this process goes on well, you read well. When it goes on ill, you read badly.¹

Such intense mental activity is not required for everything you read. A bus schedule or a menu can be read with virtually no reflection; an encyclopedia article or light fiction requires relatively little evaluation. Critical reading is most relevant,

and necessary, when the writing is intended to *persuade* you; that is, when the author argues for one perspective or opinion over others. Persuasive writing can be found in every subject—from politics, psychology, finance, religion, popular culture, and business management to sports, chess, and even gardening. Although persuasive writing is typically associated with editorials, opinion essays, and letters to editors, it may also be found in news reports and in textbooks. Wherever it is found, you are challenged to read critically.

Making Important Distinctions

A fundamental requirement for critical reading is making distinctions. The most important and most often overlooked ones are the following.

The Distinction Between the Person and the Idea

Your reaction to a sentence beginning "Adolf Hitler said . . ." would probably be very different from your reaction to one beginning "Winston Churchill said . . ." In the first instance, you might not even continue reading. At the very least, you would read with great suspicion and be ready to reject what was said. There's nothing strange about that. You've learned things about Hitler and Churchill, and it's difficult to set this information aside. In one sense, you *shouldn't* set it aside. Yet, in another sense, you *must* set it aside to be a good thinker. After all, even a lunatic can have a good idea, and a genius will, on occasion, be wrong.

If you do not control your tendency to accept or reject ideas on the basis of who expresses them, your analysis of everything you read and hear is certain to be distorted. You will judge arguments on whether the speaker is of your race, religion, political affiliation, or generation. And consequently you might embrace nonsense and reject wisdom. Aristotle's contemporaries tell us he had very thin legs and small eyes, favored conspicuous dress and jewelry, and was fastidious in the way he combed his hair.² It's not hard to imagine some Athenian ignoramus muttering to friends the ancient Greek equivalent of "Don't pay any attention to what Aristotle says—he's a wimp."

To guard against confusing the person and the idea, be aware of your reactions to people and try compensating for them. That is, listen very carefully to people you are inclined to dislike and very critically to people you are inclined to like. Judge the arguments as harshly as you wish, but only on their merits as arguments.

The Distinction Between Matters of Taste and Matters of Judgment

In Chapter 2, we saw that there are two broad types of opinion: *taste* and *judgment*. They differ significantly. In matters of taste we may express our personal preferences without defending them. In matters of judgment, however, we have an obligation to provide evidence—that is, supporting material that provides a basis for our view. Only when evidence is sufficient in both quality and quantity to remove all reasonable doubt and establish certainty does it qualify as *proof*. Evidence may take a

* Don't be confused by the fact that the word "critical" is also used to mean "finding fault with." That is not the meaning intended here.

variety of forms, notably factual details, statistics, examples, anecdotes, quotations, comparisons, or descriptions.

Many people confuse taste and judgment. They believe their right to hold an opinion is a guarantee of the opinion's rightness. This confusion often causes them to offer inadequate support (or no support at all) for views that demand support. For example, they express judgments on such controversial issues as abortion, capital punishment, the teaching of evolution in the schools, mercy killing, hiring discrimination, and laws concerning rape as if they were matters of taste rather than matters of judgment.

Keep in mind that whenever someone presents an opinion about the truth of an issue or the wisdom of an action—that is, whenever someone presents a judgment—you, as a critical thinker, have not only the right but also a duty to judge that opinion by the evidence. To be a careful thinker, you *must* do so.

The Distinction Between Fact and Interpretation

A *fact* is something known with certainty, something either objectively verifiable or demonstrable. An *interpretation* is an explanation of meaning or significance. Frequently, facts and interpretations are so intertwined that we have difficulty deciding where one leaves off and the other begins. Here is an example of such intertwining:

Interpretation (Note that calling something a fact does not make it so.)

People don't seem to care much about family life any more. At least one study has made that unfortunate fact very clear. The study, in which 1596 Americans were surveyed, was conducted for *Psychology Today* magazine in March, 1982, by Potomac Associates.³ It revealed that Americans are more concerned about the standard of living, personal health, economic stability, and employment than about family concerns. William Watts, president of Potomac Associates, commented as follows: "Traditionally, when asked to talk about their most important hopes and fears, Americans have ranked family concerns near the top of the list. . . . Americans now talk less . . . in interviews about the happiness and health of their families."

The cause of this moral decline is without question the emphasis on the self that has dominated our culture for the past two decades.

Fact

Interpretation

The danger in failing to distinguish between fact and interpretation is that you will regard uncritically statements that ought to be questioned and contrasted with other views. If the habit of confusing the two is strong enough, it can paralyze your critical sense.

The Distinction Between Literal and Ironic Statements

Not everything that is said is intended to be taken literally. Sometimes, a writer makes a point by saying the exact opposite of what is meant—that is, by using irony or satire. Suppose, for example, you encountered this passage in your reading:

Congress is right in reducing the taxes of the wealthy more than those of the working classes. After all, wealthy people not only pay more into the treasury, but they also have a higher standard of living to maintain. If the cost of soybeans has risen, so also has the cost of caviar; if the subway fare has increased, so has the maintenance cost of a Rolls-Royce and a Lear jet. If the government listens to the minor grumbling and whining of the unemployed, it surely should be responsive to the plight of the affluent.

On the surface, this certainly looks like a plea on behalf of the rich. But on closer inspection, it will be seen as a mockery of that plea. The clues are subtle, to be sure, but undeniable: the reference to the higher standard of living, the comparison of travel by Rolls-Royce or jet with travel by subway, the reference to the "plight" of the rich. Such tongue-in-cheek writing can be more biting and therefore more effective than a direct attack. Yet you must be alert to the subtlety and not misread it, or the message you receive will be very different from the message that has been expressed.

The Distinction Between an Idea's Validity and the Quality of its Expression

The way an idea is expressed can influence people's reactions. This is why a mad leader like Hitler won a large popular following even among intelligent and responsible people and why Jim Jones's followers killed their children and committed suicide in Guyana. Impassioned, eloquent expression tends to excite a favorable response, just as lifeless, inarticulate, error-filled expression prompts a negative response. Compare these two passages:

Ain't right to treat some folks good and others bad. If a man don't treat all equal, he ain't much of a man.

To achieve success in a competitive world, you must honor the first principle of success: Treat well those people who can benefit you, and ignore the others.

The first passage may seem less appealing than the second. And yet it contains an idea most philosophers would enthusiastically endorse, whereas the second contains an idea most would find reprehensible. Careful thinkers are able to appraise the passages correctly because they are aware that expression can deceive. Such thinkers make a special effort to separate form from content before judging. Thus they are able to say, "This idea is poorly expressed but profound" and "This idea is well expressed but shallow."

The Distinction Between Language and Reality

Language is our principal means of understanding reality and communicating that understanding to others. Words come so naturally and become so closely associated with what they represent that we may unconsciously regard them as synonymous with reality. That can be a costly mistake. A people's language develops according to their insights and observations, and since no single group has equal insights into all

dimensions of reality, no language is perfectly suited to express all realities. For example, Eskimos have many words for snow, each word denoting a certain kind of snow (heavy and wet versus light and fluffy, small and fine versus large and dense, and so on), so they can speak with much greater precision about snow than can English-speaking peoples. Similarly, the ancient Greeks had a number of words for love, each representing a distinct type of love (love of God, love of family, romantic or sexual love, and so forth), whereas we require our word *love* to bear an excessive burden and thereby create confusion in our discourse.

The word *self* is another good example of a term that is made to carry more meaning than it can bear. We say, “I made myself resist that triple chocolate truffle cake,” “You really ought to give yourself a chance to get over one lousy relationship before entering another,” and “Bill is not himself these days.” In each of these constructions there seem to be two distinct selves: in the first, the one controlling and the one controlled; in the second, the giver and the receiver; and in the third, Bill and not-Bill. As Peggy Rosenthal has shown, the problem is not limited to informal, everyday expression but is found in psychological discourse as well:

One thing [writers about psychology] often seem to have in mind is that *self* is a goal of some kind. But the kind varies. It can be the goal of what sounds like a treasure hunt (the familiar “finding of one’s self”), a trip (“the long journey to achieve selfhood”), a vegetable (“the maturation of the self”), or a vaguely Aristotelian process (“self-actualization is actualization of a self”). Sometimes, though, *self* seems not to be a goal but to have goals of its own: “the [mature] self now expresses . . . its intentions and goals” . . . [It can even be] a sort of balloon that expands and contracts with our moods; there’s “that enlargement of self that goes into feeling good,” whereas “in despair we have a reduced sense of self.”⁴

Rosenthal notes that some writers use *self* and *sense of self* interchangeably. “But how can this be?” she asks. “Can the sense, or awareness, of something be equal to the thing itself?” The ultimate confusion, she suggests, is found in a passage written by Carl Rogers in which he uses *self* to mean “both the considering agent and the object of consideration in the same sentence.”⁵

The reality of the *self* would be no less complex if we had half a dozen words, each designating a single aspect, instead of merely one word, but our discourse would undoubtedly be less confusing and we might well achieve a deeper, more accurate understanding of that reality. In any case, keeping in mind the distinction between language and reality will help you approach both your thinking and your communication with appropriate care and humility.

A Strategy for Critical Reading

So much for the distinctions essential to critical reading. Now we’ll consider a four-step critical reading strategy: *Skim, Reflect, Read, and Evaluate*. We’ll examine each in turn.

Step 1: Skim

To skim is to glance at selected parts of a book or article in order to gain an overview of it. On average skimming should take about fifteen or twenty minutes for a book and five or ten minutes for an article. When done effectively, skimming will not only make your reading easier and more effective; it will also save you time by sparing you the chore of *rereading* all or part of the work.

Skimming should answer these questions: *What issue is the author writing about? What is the author’s position on this issue? What are the main divisions (subtopics) of the book or article? How much evidence does the author offer in support of his or her view? What type(s) of evidence?*

In the case of a book, skim the preface or introduction for a statement of the author’s purpose in writing and essential message, the table of contents for the breakdown and sequence of the contents, the beginnings and ends of one or two chapters to learn whether the author provides previews or summaries (if they are provided, skim them for each chapter), and the end notes and/or bibliography to see how well documented the book is and the kinds of sources the author has used. If time permits, skim the entire concluding chapter to learn what judgments and/or recommendations the author makes. Sometimes the final chapter will summarize the main argument presented in the book.

For articles, skim the introduction, the section headings, the first paragraph following each heading, and the conclusion.

Step 2: Reflect

As used here, “reflection” means examining your own views rather than the author’s. Ask yourself: *What ideas do I have about this subject that could create a bias for or against the author’s view and prevent me from giving it a fair hearing?*

Bias can occur in one of two ways. The more obvious way is to have thought carefully about the issue, considered the opposing views, and decided that the evidence supports one better than the others. Far from being shameful, this process is praiseworthy—the purpose of thinking, after all, is to form conclusions. But is it fair to *prejudge* one author’s presentation on the basis of our prior conclusion about some *other* author’s presentation? No. The author we are reading now may have compelling new evidence, or she may expose an error in our thinking. The only way we can be sure is to set aside our prior conclusion long enough to read fairly.

The other way in which bias can occur is more subtle, so subtle in fact that we may be unaware of it. Each of us has many ideas that we did not form for ourselves, ideas that slipped into our minds when we were not paying close attention. Such ideas include the ones our parents and teachers expressed while we were growing up, statements made by people on talk shows or characters in films, advertising jingles, and all our casual perceptions, impressions, hunches, and assumptions. Many of these ideas have no doubt faded, but others—notably the popular ones that we have heard repeated time and again—are still present and can impact our thinking. These repeated ideas may become so familiar and comfortable that we are inclined to defend them, even though we have never evaluated them and, for that reason, they are not really our own. Because this kind of bias is both unconscious and irrational, it can pose a greater problem than the more obvious kind.

The purpose of reflection is to become aware of both kinds of bias and to control them during the remaining steps.

Step 3: Read

If you have skimmed well, this step will be relatively easy. You will already know what the author is saying; you will also understand the sequence of the author's points and the kind and amount of evidence presented. Now your task is to deepen and refine your understanding. Read the entire work carefully, at a single sitting if possible. Keep a pen or pencil in hand while reading and underline the most important sentences. Try to limit your underlining to one sentence per several paragraphs. Where appropriate, add your questions and thoughts in the margin.

In the case of a book or a long article, it is a good idea to summarize what you have read. To do this, review the sentences you have marked as important. Consider how many sentences you can combine without changing the author's meaning. Next write your summary in complete sentences, keeping to the original phrasing and the original order of presentation as much as possible to avoid distortion. Then briefly note in your own words the evidence offered by the writer. Do not attempt to elaborate on the evidence as the author did, or your summary will be too long to be useful.

If you have summarized effectively, you should now have a brief version of the original work that is faithful in content yet much easier to analyze. A whole book can be reduced to several paragraphs in this way; a full-length magazine article, to seven or eight sentences or less. Whenever you summarize, however, keep in mind the danger of distortion and oversimplification. It is not only unfair but pointless to criticize an author for something he or she did not say.

Step 4: Evaluate

Read your summary carefully, asking these questions:

Are any of the author's terms vague or ambiguous (open to more than one meaning)? In such cases, you will have to decide what meaning is implied.

Does the author use emotionally charged language as a substitute for evidence? Words like "harassment," "terrorism," "rape," "censorship," "diversity," "multicultural," "human rights," "family values," "justice," "empowerment," "freedom," "liberty," "rights," and "choice" tend to evoke an emotional response. Persuasive writing may make us feel as well as think, but when it makes us feel instead of think, it is dishonest.

Is the author's evidence relevant to the issue? No matter how comprehensive and authoritative evidence may be, if it has no bearing on the issue under discussion, it does not deserve our consideration.

Did the author omit any significant evidence? Often, the weakness in an argument lies in what the author does not say. For example, let's say an author stated that several years ago, an American engineer and his wife visited the Congo, trying to find evidence of a dinosaurlike creature reportedly living there, and also that they returned with a picture that they said documented their sighting of the creature. Everything in the statement is correct.⁶ However, one important detail is missing: the picture was severely underexposed and therefore worthless as documentation.

Are the author's examples and cases typical and comprehensive? The author's citation of some examples and cases does not necessarily establish the argument's validity. If the cases are extraordinary—exceptions rather than typical instances—they are worth very little. Similarly, if they represent one narrow aspect of the issue, they may not adequately support the author's argument.

If the author cites a scientific study, has it been replicated? The practice of the scientific community is to withhold endorsement of any researcher's findings until they have been independently confirmed. This is a wise approach, for some studies are proven to be "flukes."

If the author cites a survey, what organization designed and administered it? How large was the sample? Was it random? A survey that does not conform to established statistical principles is worthless as evidence.

Are the sources of information cited by the author still current? There is nothing necessarily wrong with old sources. Something written in 1800 may still be valid today. But later findings may have discredited older views.

Are the experts cited by the author authoritative and reliable? The fact of being well-known does not make one an authority. A Nobel Prize winner in physics may be totally incompetent in psychology or government. And even if a person cited is an authority in the field in question, her view is open to question if she has been guilty of unreliability (professional dishonesty, for example) in the past.

Do other experts agree with the experts cited by the author? In controversial matters, there is seldom any more agreement among experts than among nonexperts. A little investigation may reveal that the experts cited by the author hold the minority view!

What criticisms and counterarguments would someone who holds a different position make about this book or article? Nothing reveals the flaws on one side of an issue better than hearing the other side.

Does the author commit any errors in logic? For example, does the author overgeneralize, oversimplify, or assume facts not in evidence?

Is the author's conclusion about the evidence the most reasonable one, or is another conclusion more reasonable? Like the rest of us, authors sometimes yield to their biases and interpret evidence in a way that flatters their prior opinions. In such cases an objective assessment of the evidence may produce a different conclusion.

As you no doubt realize, the answers to many of these questions are not likely to be found either in the book or article you are evaluating or in your own head. To answer them will require further investigation on your part. Be sure to conduct whatever investigation is necessary before making your final judgment.

Expressing Your Judgment

One mistake readers commonly make in evaluating a book or article is to assume that they must agree completely or disagree completely with the author. More often than not, the most reasonable response is to accept some parts of an author's argument, reject others, and perhaps be uncertain about still others. The following guidelines will assist you in expressing your judgment:

1. If you agree in part and disagree in part, explain exactly what your position is, and support it carefully. Remember that good thinkers will judge your arguments as closely as you judge other people's arguments.

2. If some vagueness or ambiguity in the author's argument prevents you from giving a flat answer, don't attempt one. Rather, say, "it depends," and go on to explain. The if-then approach is very helpful in such cases. Here's how it works. Suppose someone had written, "A human being is an animal." You might respond as follows:

It depends on what you mean by *animal*. If you mean *human being* is included in the broad classification *animal*, as opposed to *vegetable* or *mineral*, then I agree. But if you mean a human being has nothing more than animal nature, no intellect and will that distinguish him or her from other members of the animal kingdom, then I disagree. I believe that . . .

3. If you must deal with conflicting testimony and cannot decide your position with certainty, identify the conflict and explain why you cannot be certain. If you believe that circumstances seem somewhat in favor of one side, explain those circumstances and why you are inclined to judge them as you do.

One example of conflicting testimony occurred in the highly publicized trial of Jack Henry Abbott. Abbott, who had spent 24 of his 37 years behind prison bars, was paroled after Norman Mailer arranged for Abbott's book, *In the Belly of the Beast*, to be published. Six weeks after his parole, Abbott stabbed a waiter in a dispute over the use of a restroom. Abbott testified that he thought the waiter had pulled a knife first and that he lunged forward with his knife in self-protection. A passerby, however, witnessed the incident and testified that the waiter had made what appeared to be a "conciliatory gesture" and turned to walk away when Abbott raced after him, reached over his shoulder, and stabbed him with "terrible ferocity," then taunted him as he lay dying.⁷

In this case, you might reasonably say that although you cannot be certain which testimony is correct, circumstances seem to favor the witness's testimony. You would go on to explain that Abbott's testimony was more likely than the witness's to be colored by emotion and self-interest.

These guidelines may seem to encourage evasion or straddling the fence. They are not intended to do so and should not be used for that purpose. Apply them when reasonableness demands a qualified answer, not in situations in which timidity prompts you to avoid answering.

A Sample Evaluation

To see how a typical evaluation might proceed, imagine you are evaluating a magazine article arguing that "inferior" people should be sterilized at puberty. You have completed the first three steps in the critical reading process and have summarized the author's argument as follows. (For reference purposes, the sentences and items of evidence are numbered.)

1. A serious world population problem exists today.
2. The ideal solution is for everyone to be responsible in deciding whether he or she should reproduce.
3. However, few people make that decision rationally—emotion overwhelms logic.
4. Moreover, the least talented and least intelligent are likely to have the most children.
5. In time, this tendency may set the process of evolution in reverse.
6. The best and most practical solution is to identify inferior people and force them to be sterilized at puberty.

As evidence in support of the argument, the article presented:

7. UN statistics on world population
8. Selected UN statistics on world poverty, illiteracy, and disease
9. A research study showing that more affluent, better-educated, higher-IQ couples tend to have fewer children
10. Quotations from geneticists showing the favorable genetic effects that would occur if only higher-IQ individuals were to reproduce
11. Quotations from medical authorities showing the benefits that would accrue to world health if people with hereditary diseases did not reproduce

Your evaluation of the argument and evidence might look like this (parenthetical numbers refer to the preceding statements and evidence):

Concerning the Clarity of the Argument:

Several terms are ambiguous. Do *talented* and *intelligent* refer to the broad range of abilities or to some specific ones? People with mild mental impairment often possess considerable talent and intelligence if measured by a broad definition of the terms. Does the *process of evolution* (5) mean survival of the physically fit or the perpetuation of culture as we know it? And does *inferior people* (6) mean those with hereditary diseases, the mentally impaired, neurotics, nonconformists, or all of these?

Concerning the Questions Informed Critics Might Raise:

These are the most probable ones: Isn't it possible that forced sterilization might pose even worse dangers to civilization than a reversing of evolution (5)? Might it not lead to totalitarianism? Wouldn't a better and more practical solution (6) be to improve the distribution of wealth among nations, to find cures for disease, to share technology, and to expand educational opportunity (including education in birth control methods)?

Concerning the Kind and Quality of the Evidence:

One significant question about some of the evidence (10, 11) concerns how typical and comprehensive it is. Is the view expressed in the quotations one that is shared by most geneticists and medical authorities, or is it a minority position? An even more important question concerns

the evidence that is omitted. Surely psychologists, sociologists, and historians could contribute to this issue. Some of the questions they could answer are these: What psychological effects would forced sterilization have on those subjected to it? A feeling of worthlessness, perhaps, or rage? What social behavior would be likely to result from such effects? Violence? Revolution? What historical precedents are there to help us measure the probable effects?

In light of these considerations, you might conclude that although the world population problem and the related concerns of poverty, illiteracy, and disease are serious and should be addressed, the idea of forced sterilization should be opposed—at least until its advocates clarify their terms and answer the important critical questions. If you were to make a formal response to the argument in an analytical paper or article, you would develop your ideas thoroughly, meeting the same standards you expect of others. (For a discussion of the principles and approaches used in analytical writing, see Appendix A.)

WARM-UP EXERCISES

- 4.1 Make up as many new words—nonwords like *garrumptive*—as you can to reflect people's moods. In each case, indicate the specific mood each word reflects. Be sure to list many possible words before choosing the best one.
- 4.2 Make up a new name for yourself (both first name and last), one that fits the special qualities you have or are striving for. Be sure to consider unusual names (Honor Trueblood, Rick Decent), and list many possibilities before choosing the best one.
- 4.3 Your young nephew is confused. He has learned that "He who hesitates is lost" and that "Haste makes waste." The sayings seem to oppose each other and he wants to know which is right. Answer in a way he will understand.

APPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Read the following dialogue carefully. Decide which statements are reasonable and which are not. Provide a brief explanation of why you consider any statement unreasonable.

[Scene: A college dormitory room. A bull session is in progress. George and Ed, freshmen at Proudly Tech, are discussing academic affairs with their sophomore roommate, Jake.]

GEORGE: When I arrived on campus last month, I went to see my adviser to get my freshman English course waived. I didn't get

to first base with him. "Everyone takes freshman English," he said. "Everyone!" I'll bet he's got that line taped and just plays it whenever a student raises the question. It really burns me having to take that course. I can see it as a requirement for most students. But I earned straight B's in high school English. Why should I spend more time on that stuff in college?

ED: You're right, George. This place is like home—everybody's on your back making you do things you don't want to do. I should have gone to Bloomville State instead of to this dump.

JAKE: What's so great about Bloomville State?

ED: They let you take whatever courses you want. No required courses at all.

JAKE: Look, my uncle went there after the Korean War. He told me a lot about his college days. But he never mentioned that.

ED: It's true. Listen, there was this guy I was talking to at the bar in the train station when I was coming up here. He goes to Bloomville and he told me they had no required courses.

GEORGE: That really bugs me. Straight B's. And still I've got to take this crappy course . . .

JAKE: Listen, pal. You're lucky you were born talented in writing. I wish I had that gift. For me, nothing but D's and F's. Hopeless.

ED: Who'd you have for English, Jake?

JAKE: Crawford. An OK guy, I guess, but sort of scholarly. Talks over everybody's head, always quoting some writer or other.

ED: I've got Mr. Schwartz. What's the word on him?

JAKE: You've lucked out, boy. Three of my friends had him last year and two got B's and one a B+. A guy who grades like that has got to be a winner.

GEORGE: I'm glad somebody's luck held. Mine certainly didn't. For the two comps I've written so far, I've got a D+ and a C-.

JAKE: Who have you got?

GEORGE: Mr. Stiletto.

JAKE: He wasn't here last year.

GEORGE: I'll bet he's just out of graduate school. Or maybe he never went. At any rate, he sure has it in for me. Maybe he's prejudiced against Germans.

ED: Maybe you picked the wrong side of the issue to write on—you know, the one he disagrees with.