

READ, REASON, WRITE

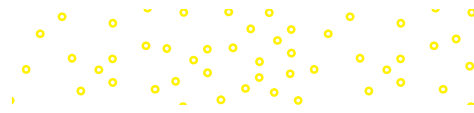
AN ARGUMENT TEXT AND READER

12TH EDITION

DOROTHY U. SEYLER

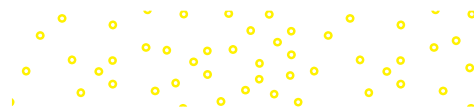
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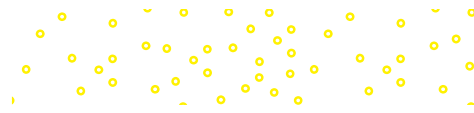


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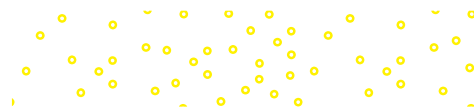


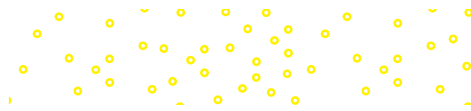
Read, Reason, Write

AN ARGUMENT TEXT AND READER

TWELFTH EDITION

Dorothy U. Seyler
Allen Brizee





READ, REASON, WRITE: AN ARGUMENT TEXT AND READER, TWELFTH EDITION

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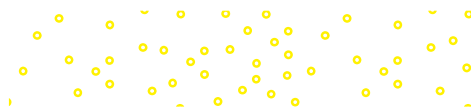
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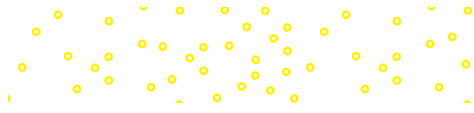
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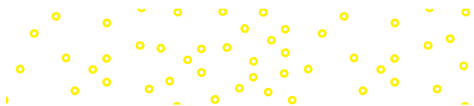
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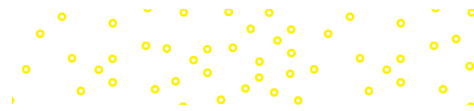
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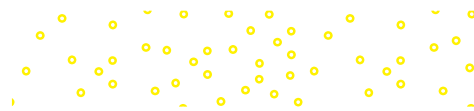
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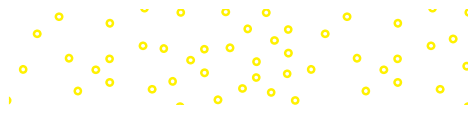
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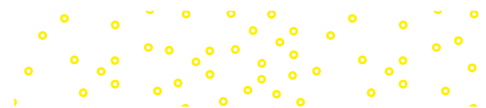
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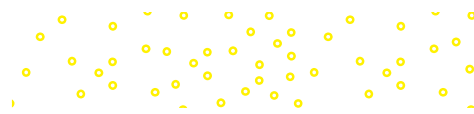
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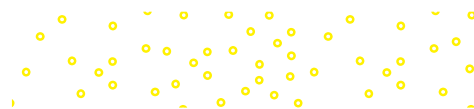
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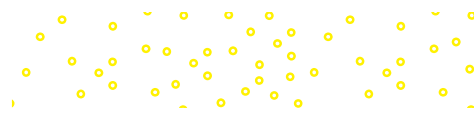
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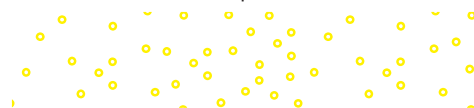
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New to the Twelfth Edition

This new edition continues the key features of previous editions while adding new material that will make it even more helpful to both students and instructors. Significant changes include the following:

- **New readings.** This edition features a rich collection of eighty readings, both timely and classic, that provide examples of the varied uses of language and strategies for argument. Forty-six of these readings are entirely new to this edition and include high-quality examples of argument written by author and activist Kaye Wise Whitehead, philosopher and novelist Kwame Anthony Appiah, Pulitzer Prize-winning foreign policy journalist Anne Applebaum, noted author and professor of psychology Steven Pinker, political columnist and CNN host Fareed Zakaria, astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson, and engineer and U.S. Army Reserve soldier Lisa Jaster—to name only a few.
- **New coverage.** An entirely new section in Chapter 5 introduces students to the concepts of visual rhetoric and visual literacy, including Gestalt principles and the C.A.R.P. design model. Chapter 6 includes additional in-depth coverage of deductive reasoning in written argument, and Chapter 13 is updated to address changes in technology for drafting, revising, editing, and proofreading a paper, as well as submitting it to an instructor.
- **New visuals.** Almost all of the readings in this edition feature compelling visuals that illustrate the topics discussed therein. At the outset of each chapter, students are presented with a visual prompt tied to critical thinking questions that engage them with key concepts covered throughout that chapter.
- **Updated documentation coverage.** MLA coverage is updated throughout to align with the eighth edition of the *MLA Handbook*. Chapter 14 includes instruction around these new guidelines, including ten new example MLA citation models. This chapter also covers the latest APA guidelines for using and citing secondary sources.
- **Focus on current issues that are relevant to students.** Of the seven chapters in the anthology section, all have new readings and several take on a new and timely focus. For example, Chapter 17 on marriage focuses on the issue of marriage equality, Chapter 18 on education concentrates on the topics of school choice and tuition, and Chapter 20 on laws and rights examines guns on campus and the “Dream Act.”

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Features of *Read, Reason, Write*

Read, Reason, Write supports and aligns with the WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition (NCTE, 2014). This text's content and presentation are guided by decades of classroom experience and by research and theory in composition and rhetoric. This combination has made *Read, Reason, Write* a best-selling text for now twelve editions.

- **Teaches critical thinking, reading, and composing through a step-by-step approach to inquiry, analysis, and writing.** This text introduces students to various genres and guides them in analyzing style, rhetorical construction, and effectiveness. It provides exercises for individual and group work to practice critical reading and analysis. Questions are included to guide students in responding to, analyzing, evaluating, and researching and writing about content.
- **Provides instruction for beginning, drafting, completing, and then revising summaries, analyses, and arguments.** Guided by convention expectations, the text provides instruction in overall organization, paragraph structure, and sentence-level issues such as tone, mechanics, and attribution tailored to various genres. The text also contains instruction in analyzing and using graphics, images, and document design, helping students to think critically about—and also produce—visually enhanced communication.
- **Provides instruction in both classical and contemporary rhetorical theory.** The text presents rhetorical theories in an accessible way to help instructors teach and students learn these concepts. But, *Read, Reason, Write* also presents argument as contextual: written (or spoken) to a specific audience with the expectation of counterarguments.
- **Includes guidelines and revision boxes throughout.** These tools provide an easy reference for students.
- **Offers thorough and easy-to-reference coverage of both MLA and APA documentation requirements.**
- **Features nine student essays.** These illustrate the kinds of writing students will be asked to prepare in the course—summaries, analyses, arguments, and formally documented papers.
- **Presents a rich collection of readings.** Readings are both timely and classic, providing examples of the varied uses of language and strategies for argument.
- **Offers a brief but comprehensive introduction to reading and analyzing literature.** Found in the appendix, this section also contains a student essay of literary analysis.

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Let Connect Composition Help Your Students Achieve their Goals

Connect is a highly reliable, easy-to-use homework and learning management solution that embeds learning science and award-winning adaptive tools to improve student results. Connect Composition addresses the specific needs of the writing course and various redesign models of instruction. In addition to the innovative content, revolutionary learning technology drives skills for the Argument course through a selection of corresponding toolsets.

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One overarching goal is at the heart of *Power of Process*: for students to become self-regulating, strategic readers and writers. *Power of Process* facilitates engaged reading and writing processes using research-based best practices suggested by major professional reading and writing organizations.

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The Connect Composition eReader provides approximately seventy compelling readings that instructors can incorporate into their syllabi. Readings are available across a wide variety of genres, including arguments and literary selections. Instructors can filter the readings by theme, discipline, genre, rhetorical mode, reading level, and word count.

LearnSmart Achieve

LearnSmart Achieve offers students an adaptive, individualized learning experience designed to ensure the efficient mastery of reading and writing skills in tandem. By

Power of Process

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targeting students’ particular strengths and weaknesses, *LearnSmart Achieve* customizes its lessons and facilitates high-impact learning at an accelerated pace.

LearnSmart Achieve provides instruction and practice for your students in the following areas.

UNIT	TOPIC	
THE WRITING PROCESS	The Writing Process Generating Ideas Planning and Organizing	Writing a Rough Draft Revising Proofreading, Formatting, and Producing Texts
CRITICAL READING	Reading to Understand Literal Meaning Evaluating Truth and Accuracy in a Text	Evaluating the Effectiveness and Appropriateness of a Text
THE RESEARCH PROCESS	Developing and Implementing a Research Plan Evaluating Information and Sources	Integrating Source Material into a Text Using Information Ethically and Legally

REASONING AND ARGUMENT	Developing an Effective Thesis or Claim Using Evidence and Reasoning to Support a Thesis or Claim	Using Ethos (Ethics) to Persuade Readers Using Pathos (Emotion) to Persuade Readers Using Logos (Logic) to Persuade Readers
GRAMMAR AND COMMON SENTENCE PROBLEMS	Parts of Speech Phrases and Clauses Sentence Types Fused (Run-on) Sentences Comma Splices Sentence Fragments Pronouns	Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement Pronoun Reference Subject-Verb Agreement Verbs and Verbals Adjectives and Adverbs Dangling and Misplaced Modifiers Mixed Constructions Verb Tense and Voice Shifts
PUNCTUATION AND MECHANICS	Commas Semicolons Colons End Punctuation Apostrophes Quotation Marks Dashes	Parentheses Hyphens Abbreviations Capitalization Italics Numbers Spelling
STYLE AND WORD CHOICE	Wordiness Eliminating Redundancies Sentence Variety Coordination and Subordination	Faulty Comparisons Word Choice Clichés, Slang, and Jargon Parallelism
MULTILINGUAL WRITERS	Helping Verbs, Gerunds and Infinitives, and Phrasal Verbs Nouns, Verbs, and Objects Articles	Count and Noncount Nouns Sentence Structure and Word Order Subject-Verb Agreement Participles and Adverb Placement

LearnSmart Achieve can be assigned by units and/or topics.

Book-Specific Resources for Instructors

The following teaching resources are available in Connect. Please contact your local McGraw-Hill representative for the username and password to access these resources.

Gradeable Assessments tied to Readings

Instructors can assign gradeable assessments tied to more than sixty of the reading selections in the twelfth edition of *Read, Reason, Write*. More than 700 new assessments are now available through Connect.

The *Read, Reason, Write* Master Course

In the *Read, Reason, Write* Master Course, which you can copy to your own Connect account and adapt as you wish, you will find various Connect Composition assignment types to accelerate learning, including *LearnSmart Achieve* topics, pre- and post-tests,

Power of Process assignments, Writing Assignments, and Discussion Board prompts for every chapter of the text. Contact your local McGraw-Hill representative to copy the course to your Connect account.

Instructor's Manual

The Instructor's Manual is written with the diverse needs of composition instructors in mind. Faculty new to teaching reading will appreciate the brief presentations of theory that accompany the reading pedagogy in the textbook, as well as the suggestions for how to teach some of the more difficult argument writing skills. Faculty new to teaching writing will find help with ways to organize chapters into teachable sections and suggestions for selecting among the easier and more challenging readings.

Flexible Content for Your Argument Course: Customize *Read, Reason, Write with Create*[™]

As an alternative to the traditional text, instructors may use McGraw-Hill Create[™] to arrange chapters to align with their syllabus, eliminate those they do not wish to assign, and add any of the *Read, Reason, Write* content available only in Create[™] to build one or multiple print or e-book texts, including Connect Composition access codes. McGraw-Hill Create is a self-service Web site that allows instructors and departments to create customized course materials using McGraw-Hill's comprehensive, cross-disciplinary content and digital products. Through Create[™], instructors may also add their own material, such as a course syllabus, a course rubric, course standards, and any specific instruction for students.

From the Authors

I have written in previous prefaces to *Read, Reason, Write* that being asked to prepare a new edition is much like being asked back to a friend's home: You count on it and yet are still delighted when the invitation comes. But an invitation to a 12th edition?! I am amazed and humbled. I am also delighted to introduce you to my new coauthor Allen and to share with you our story. Allen is actually a former student of mine from NVCC. He was kind enough to let me know when he completed his PhD and took a position at Loyola University Maryland in Baltimore—and thus made it easy for me to find him when the time came to bring in a new member of the team.

We can assert that while Allen has brought some fresh ideas to this edition, the essential character of this text remains the same: to help students become better writers of the kinds of papers they are most often required to write both in college and the workplace, that is, summaries, analyses, reports, arguments, and documented essays. *Read, Reason, Write* remains committed to showing students how reading, analytic, argumentative, and research skills are interrelated and how these skills combine to develop critical thinking.

It continues to be true that no book of value is written alone. Over its more than thirty years of life, a chorus of voices have enriched this text, too many now to list them all. Two editors should be given a special thanks, though: Steve Pensinger, who led the team through four early editions, and Lisa Moore, who brought new ideas to the 6th and 7th editions. Other sponsoring editors, developmental editors, and production editors have enriched my journey through eleven editions and aided us in preparing this 12th edition. May you all live long and prosper!

With Allen's support I will once more close by dedicating *Read, Reason, Write* to my daughter Ruth, who, in spite of her own career and interests, continues to give generously of her time, reading possible essays and listening patiently to my endless debates about changes. And for all of the new students who will use this edition: May you understand that it is the liberal education that makes continued growth of the human spirit both possible and pleasurable.

**Dorothy U. Seyler, Professor Emerita,
Northern Virginia Community College**
**Allen Brizee, Associate Professor,
Loyola University Maryland**

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About the Authors

DOROTHY SEYLER is professor emerita of English at Northern Virginia Community College. A Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the College of William & Mary, Dr. Seyler holds advanced degrees from Columbia University and the State University of New York at Albany. She taught at Ohio State University, the University of Kentucky, and Nassau Community College before moving with her family to Northern Virginia.

In addition to articles published in both scholarly journals and popular magazines, Dr. Seyler is the author of ten college textbooks, including *Introduction to Literature*, *Doing Research*, *Steps to College Reading*, and *Patterns of Reflection. Read, Reason, Write* was first published in 1984. In 2007, she was elected to membership in the Cosmos Club in Washington, D.C., for “excellence in education.”

Professor Seyler is also the author of *The Obelisk and the Englishman: The Pioneering Discoveries of Egyptologist William Bankes* (2015), a “fascinating story,” according to *Kirkus Reviews*, “of a figure who deserves to be much better known.” She enjoys tennis, golf, and travel—and writing about both sports and travel.

ALLEN BRIZEE is associate professor of writing at Loyola University Maryland. At Loyola, Professor Brizee teaches courses in first-year writing, rhetoric, technical writing, and writing for the Web. He also coordinates the writing internship program. Allen began his educational journey as a student of Dorothy’s at Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC). After graduating, he transferred to Virginia Tech, where he earned a BA in English (Phi Beta Kappa) and a master’s in English.

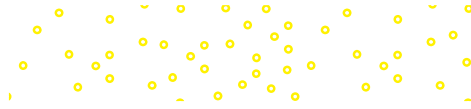
Professor Brizee taught part time at NVCC, The George Washington University, and the University of Maryland while working as a technical writer. He then completed his PhD at Purdue and, while there, also worked on the widely used Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL).

Dr. Brizee's research interests include writing pedagogy and civic engagement, and he has published articles in a number of academic journals. He coauthored *Partners in Literacy: A Writing Center Model for Civic Engagement* and coedited *Commitment to Justice in Jesuit Higher Education*, 3rd edition. He enjoys collaborating with community groups in Baltimore and participating in medieval martial arts.

Critical Reading and Analysis



Writers and Their Sources



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READ: What is the situation in the photo? Who are the two figures, where are they, and how do they differ?

REASON: What ideas are suggested by the photo?

REFLECT/WRITE: Why might this visual have been chosen for Chapter 1?

“Are you happy with your new car?” Oscar asks.
“Oh, yes, I love my new car,” Rachel responds.
“Why?” queries Oscar.
“Oh, it’s just great—and Dad paid for most of it,” Rachel exclaims.
“So you like it because it was cheap,” Oscar says. “But wasn’t your father going to pay for whatever car you chose?”
“Well, yes—within reason.”
“Then why did you choose the Corolla? Why is it so great?”
Rachel ponders a moment and then replies: “It’s small enough for me to feel comfortable driving it, but not so small that I would be frightened by trucks. It gets good mileage, and Toyota cars have a good reputation.”
“Hmm. Maybe I should think about a Corolla. Then again, I wouldn’t part with my Miata!” Oscar proclaims.

A simple conversation, right? In fact, this dialogue represents an *argument*. You may not recognize it as a “typical” argument. After all, there is no real dispute between Oscar and Rachel—no yelling, no hurt feelings. But in its most basic form, an argument is a *claim* (Rachel’s car is great) supported by *reasons* (the car’s size, mileage, and brand). Similar arguments could be made in favor of this car in other contexts. For instance, Rachel might have seen (and been persuaded by) a television or online Toyota advertisement, or she might have read an article making similar claims in a magazine such as *Consumer Reports*. In turn, she might decide to develop her argument into an essay or speech for one of her courses.

READING, WRITING, AND THE CONTEXTS OF ARGUMENT

Arguments, it seems, are everywhere. Well, what about this textbook, you counter. Its purpose is to inform, not to present an argument. True—to a degree. But textbook authors also make choices about what is important to include and how students should learn the material. Even writing primarily designed to inform says to readers: Do it my way! Well, what about novels, you “argue.” Surely they are not arguments. A good point—to a degree. The ideas about human life and experience we find in novels are more subtle, more indirect, than the points we meet head-on in many arguments. Still, expressive writing presents ideas, ways of seeing the world. It seems that arguments can be simple or profound, clearly stated or implied. And we can find them in many—if not most—of our uses of language.

You can accept this larger scope of argument and still expect that in your course on argument and critical thinking you probably will not be asked to write a textbook or a novel. You might, though, be asked to write a summary or a style analysis, so you should think about how those tasks might connect to the world of argument. Count on this: You will be asked to write! Why work on your writing skills? Here are good answers to this question:

- Communication is the single most important skill sought by employers.
- The better writer you become, the better reader you will be.

- The more confident a writer you become, the more efficiently you will handle written assignments in all your courses.
- The more you write, the more you learn about who you are and what really matters to you.

You are about to face a variety of writing assignments. Always think about what role each assignment asks of you. Are you a student demonstrating knowledge? A citizen arguing for tougher drunk-driving laws? A scholar presenting the results of research? A friend having a conversation about a new car? Any writer—including you—will take on different roles, writing for different audiences, using different strategies to reach each audience. There are many kinds of argument and many ways to be successful—or unsuccessful—in preparing them. Your argument course will be challenging. This text will help you meet that challenge.

RESPONDING TO SOURCES

If this is a text about *writing* arguments, why does it contain so many readings? (You noticed!) There are good reasons for the readings you find here:

- College and the workplace demand that you learn complex information through reading. This text will give you lots of practice.
- You need to read to develop your critical thinking skills.
- Your reading will often serve as a basis for writing. In a course on argument, the focus of attention shifts from you to your subject, a subject others have debated before you. You will need to understand the issue, think carefully about the views of others, and only then join in the conversation.

To understand how critical thinkers may respond to sources, let's examine "The Gettysburg Address," Abraham Lincoln's famous speech dedicating the Gettysburg Civil War battlefield. We can use this document to see the various ways writers respond—in writing—to the writing of others.

THE GETTYSBURG ADDRESS

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or to detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead

we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth.

Abraham Lincoln, “The Gettysburg Address,” (1863).

What Does It Say?

THE RESPONSE TO CONTENT

Instructors often ask students to *summarize* their reading of a complex chapter, a supplementary text, or a series of journal articles on library reserve. Frequently, book report assignments specify that summary and evaluation be combined. Your purpose in writing a summary is to show your understanding of the work’s main ideas and of the relationships among those ideas. If you can put what you have read into your own words and focus on the text’s chief points, then you have command of that material. Here is a sample restatement of Lincoln’s “Address”:

Our nation was initially built on a belief in liberty and equality, but its future is now being tested by civil war. It is appropriate for us to dedicate this battlefield, but those who fought here have dedicated it better than we. We should dedicate ourselves to continue the fight to maintain this nation and its principles of government.

Sometimes it is easier to recite or quote famous or difficult works than to state, more simply and in your own words, what has been written. The ability to summarize reflects strong writing skills. For more coverage of writing summaries, see pp. 10–12. (For coverage of paraphrasing, a task similar to summary, see pp. 15–19.)

How Is It Written? How Does It Compare with Another Work?

THE ANALYTIC RESPONSE

Summary requirements are often combined with analysis or evaluation, as in a book report. Most of the time you will be expected to *do something* with what you have read, and to summarize will be insufficient. Frequently you will be asked to analyze a work—that is, to explain the writer’s choice of style (or the work’s larger rhetorical context). This means examining sentence patterns, organization, metaphors, and other techniques selected by the writer to convey attitude and give force to ideas. Developing your skills in analysis will make you both a better reader and a better writer.

Many writers have examined Lincoln’s word choice, sentence structure, and choice of metaphors to make clear the sources of power in this speech.* Analyzing Lincoln’s style, you might examine, among other elements, his effective use of *tricolon*: the three-fold repetition of a grammatical structure, with the three points placed in ascending order of significance.

* See, for example, Gilbert Highet’s essay, “The Gettysburg Address,” in *The Clerk of Oxenford: Essays on Literature and Life* (New York: Oxford UP, 1954), to which I am indebted in the following analysis.

Lincoln uses two effective tricolons in his brief address. The first focuses on the occasion for his speech, the dedication of the battlefield: “we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow. . . .” The best that the living can do is formally dedicate; only those who died there for the principle of liberty are capable of making the battlefield “hallow.” The second tricolon presents Lincoln’s concept of democratic government, a government “of the people, by the people, for the people.” The purpose of government—“for the people”—resides in the position of greatest significance.

A second type of analysis, a comparison of styles of two writers, is a frequent variation of the analytic assignment. By focusing on similarities and differences in writing styles, you can see more clearly the role of choice in writing and may also examine the issue of the degree to which differences in purpose affect style. One student, for example, produced a thoughtful and interesting study of Lincoln’s style in contrast to that of Martin Luther King, Jr.:

Although Lincoln’s sentence structure is tighter than King’s, and King likes the rhythms created by repetition, both men reflect their familiarity with the King James Bible in their use of its cadences and expressions. Instead of saying eighty-seven years ago, Lincoln, seeking solemnity, selects the biblical expression “Fourscore and seven years ago.” Similarly, King borrows from the Bible and echoes Lincoln when he writes “Five score years ago.”

Is It Logical? Is It Adequately Developed? Does It Achieve Its Purpose?

THE EVALUATION RESPONSE

Even when the stated purpose of an essay is “pure” analysis, the analysis implies a judgment. We analyze Lincoln’s style because we recognize that “The Gettysburg Address” is a great piece of writing and we want to see how it achieves its power. On other occasions, evaluation is the stated purpose for close reading and analysis. The columnist who challenges a previously published editorial has analyzed the editorial and found it flawed. The columnist may fault the editor’s logic or lack of adequate or relevant support for the editorial’s main idea. In each case the columnist makes a negative evaluation of the editorial, but that judgment is an informed one based on the columnist’s knowledge of language and the principles of good argument.

Part of the ability to judge wisely lies in recognizing each writer’s (or speaker’s) purpose, audience, and occasion. It would be inappropriate to assert that Lincoln’s address is weakened by its lack of facts about the battle. The historian’s purpose is to record the number killed or to analyze the generals’ military tactics. Lincoln’s purpose was different.

As Lincoln reflected upon this young country’s being torn apart by civil strife, he saw the dedication of the Gettysburg battlefield as an opportunity to challenge the country to fight for its survival and the principles upon which it was founded. The result was a brief but moving speech that appropriately examines the connection between the life and death of soldiers and the birth and survival of a nation.

These sentences begin an analysis of Lincoln’s train of thought and use of metaphors. The writer shows an understanding of Lincoln’s purpose and the context in which he spoke.

How Does It Help Me to Understand Other Works, Ideas, Events?

THE RESEARCH RESPONSE

Frequently you will read not to analyze or evaluate but rather to use the source as part of learning about a particular subject. Lincoln’s address is significant for the Civil War historian both as an event of that war and as an influence on our thinking about that war. “The Gettysburg Address” is also vital to the biographer’s study of Lincoln’s life or to the literary critic’s study either of famous speeches or of the Bible’s influence on English writing styles. Thus Lincoln’s brief speech is a valuable source for students in a variety of disciplines. It becomes part of their research process. Able researchers study it carefully, analyze it thoroughly, place it in its proper historical, literary, and personal contexts, and use it to develop their own arguments.

To practice reading and responding to sources, study the following article by Deborah Tannen. The exercises that follow will check your reading skills and your understanding of the various responses to reading just discussed. Use the prereading questions to become engaged with Tannen’s essay.

WHO DOES THE TALKING HERE?

DEBORAH TANNEN

Professor of linguistics at Georgetown University, Deborah Tannen writes popular books on the uses of language by “ordinary” people. Among her many books are *Talking from 9 to 5* (1994) and *I Only Say This Because I Love You* (2004). Here she responds to the debate over who talks more, men or women.

PREREADING QUESTIONS What is the occasion for Tannen’s article—what is she responding to? Who does most of the talking in your family—and are you okay with the answer?

It’s no surprise that a one-page article published this month in the journal *Science* inspired innumerable newspaper columns and articles. The study, by Matthias Mehl and four colleagues, claims to lay to rest, once and for all, the stereotype that women talk more than men, by proving—scientifically—that women and men talk equally. **1**

The notion that women talk more was reinforced last year when Louann Brizendine’s “The Female Brain” cited the finding that women utter, on average, 20,000 words a day, men 7,000. (Brizendine later disavowed the statistic, as there was no study to back it up.) Mehl and his colleagues outfitted 396 college students with devices that recorded their speech. The female subjects spoke an average of 16,215 words a day, the men 15,669. The difference is insignificant. Case closed. **2**

Or is it? Can we learn who talks more by counting words? No, according to a forthcoming article surveying 70 studies of gender differences in talkativeness. (Imagine—70 studies published in scientific journals, and we’re still asking the question.) In their survey, Campbell Leaper and Melanie Ayres found that counting words yielded no consistent differences, though number of words per speaking turn did. (Men, on average, used more.) **3**

4 This doesn't surprise me. In my own research on gender and language, I quickly surmised that to understand who talks more, you have to ask: What's the situation? What are the speakers using words for?

5 The following experience conveys the importance of situation. I was addressing a small group in a suburban Virginia living room. One man stood out because he talked a lot, while his wife, who was sitting beside him, said nothing at all. I described to the group a complaint common among women about men they live with: At the end of a day she tells him what happened, what she thought and how she felt about it. Then she asks, "How was your day?"—and is disappointed when he replies, "Fine," "Nothing much" or "Same old rat race."

6 The loquacious man spoke up. "You're right," he said. Pointing to his wife, he added, "She's the talker in our family." Everyone laughed. But he explained, "It's true. When we come home, she does all the talking. If she didn't, we'd spend the evening in silence."

7 The "how was your day?" conversation typifies the kind of talk women tend to do more of: spoken to intimates and focusing on personal experience, your own or others'. I call this "rapport-talk." It contrasts with "report-talk"—giving or exchanging information about impersonal topics, which men tend to do more.

8 Studies that find men talking more are usually carried out in formal experiments or public contexts such as meetings. For example, Marjorie Swacker observed an academic conference where women presented 40 percent of the papers and were 42 percent of the audience but asked only 27 percent of the questions; their questions were, on average, also shorter by half than the men's questions. And David and Myra Sadker showed that boys talk more in mixed-sex classrooms—a context common among college students, a factor skewing the results of Mehl's new study.

9 Many men's comfort with "public talking" explains why a man who tells his wife he has nothing to report about his day might later find a funny story to tell at dinner with two other couples (leaving his wife wondering, "Why didn't he tell me first?").



©Corbis/VCG/Getty Images RF

Who is the most passive figure in this group?

In addition to situation, you have to consider what speakers are doing with words. Campbell and Ayres note that many studies find women doing more “affiliative speech” such as showing support, agreeing or acknowledging others’ comments. Drawing on studies of children at play as well as my own research of adults talking, I often put it this way: For women and girls, talk is the glue that holds a relationship together. Their best friend is the one they tell everything to. Spending an evening at home with a spouse is when this kind of talk comes into its own. Since this situation is uncommon among college students, it’s another factor skewing the new study’s results. 10

Women’s rapport-talk probably explains why many people think women talk more. A man wants to read the paper, his wife wants to talk; his girlfriend or sister spends hours on the phone with her friend or her mother. He concludes: Women talk more. 11

Yet Leaper and Ayres observed an overall pattern of men speaking more. That’s a conclusion women often come to when men hold forth at meetings, in social groups or when delivering one-on-one lectures. All of us—women and men—tend to notice others talking more in situations where we talk less. 12

Counting may be a start—or a stop along the way—to understanding gender differences. But it’s understanding when we tend to talk and what we’re doing with words that yields insights we can count on. 13

Deborah Tannen, “Who Does the Talking Here?” *The Washington Post*, 15 Jul. 2007. Copyright ©2007 Deborah Tannen. Reprinted by permission.

QUESTIONS FOR READING AND REASONING

1. What was the conclusion of the researchers who presented their study in *Science*?
2. Why are their results not telling the whole story, according to Tannen? Instead of counting words, what should we study?
3. What two kinds of talk does Tannen label? Which gender does the most of each type of talking?
4. What is Tannen’s main idea or thesis?

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND WRITING

5. How do the details—and the style—in the opening and concluding paragraphs contribute to the author’s point? Write a paragraph answer to this question. Then consider: Which one of the different responses to reading does your paragraph illustrate?
6. Do you agree with Tannen that understanding how words are used must be part of any study of men and women talking? If so, why? If not, how would you respond to her argument?
7. “The Gettysburg Address” is a valuable document for several kinds of research projects. For what kinds of research would Tannen’s essay be useful? List several possibilities and be prepared to discuss your list with classmates.