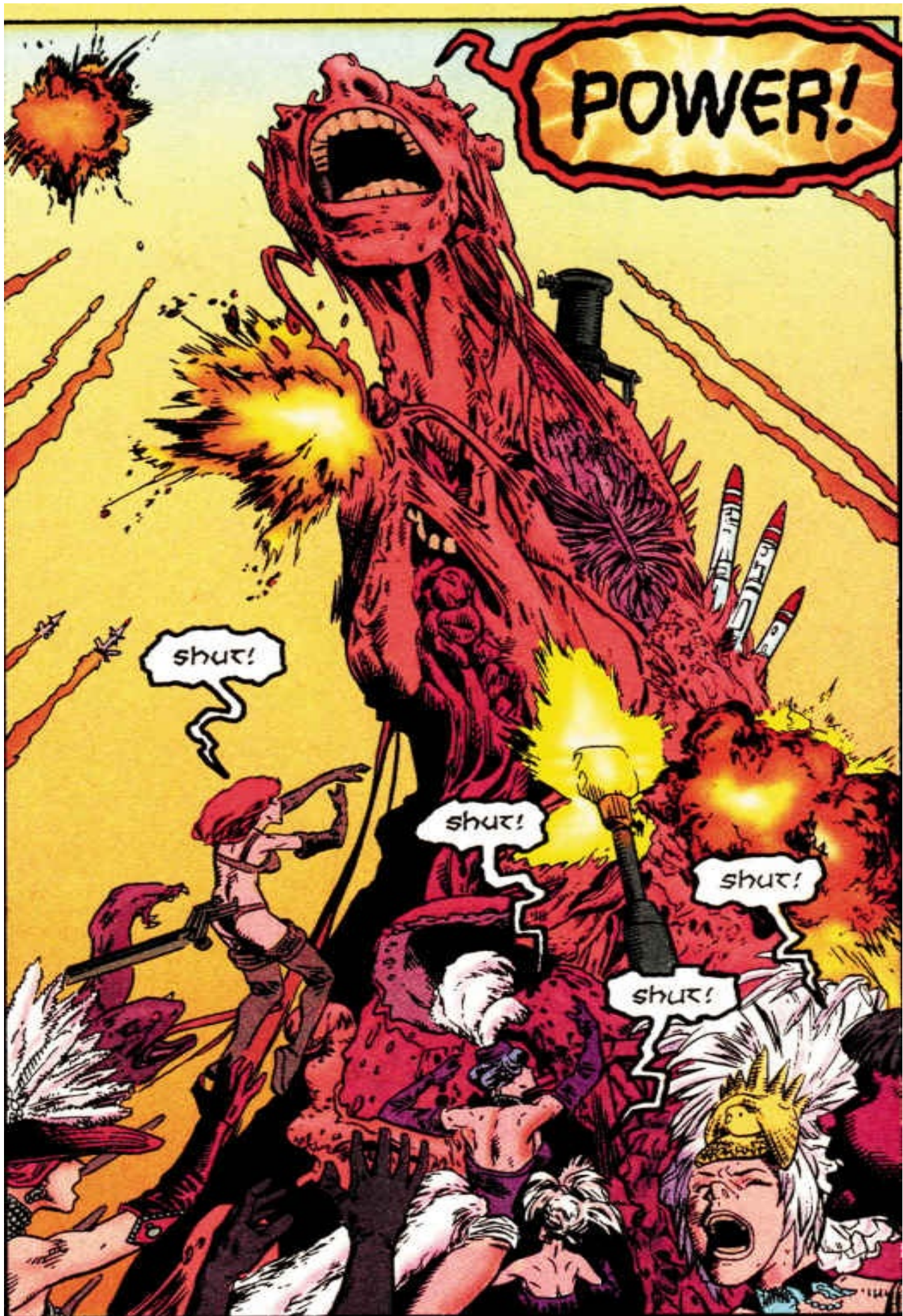


PART

2

Reading and Responding to Arguments



POWER!

shut!

shut!

shut!

shut!

CHAPTER 2

Thinking and Reading Critically

AT ISSUE

Do Violent Media Images Trigger Violent Behavior?

In recent years, the popular media seem to have become increasingly violent. This is particularly true of visuals in video games and on some Internet sites, but graphically violent images also appear regularly in films, on TV, in comic books, and even in newspapers. Some research has suggested that these violent images can have a negative effect on those who view them, particularly on adolescents and young children. In fact, some media critics believe that these violent images have helped to create an increasingly violent culture, which in turn has inspired young people to commit violent crimes (including school shootings) such as the massacres at Virginia Tech in 2007 and Newtown, Connecticut, in 2012. The shooter who killed 12 people and injured 58 others at the premiere of *The Dark Knight Rises* in Aurora, Colorado, on July 20, 2012, was a devotee of violent role-playing video games, and some news reports emphasized that fact. Other observers, however, argue that violent media images are not to blame for such events—and that, in fact, these images may provide a safe outlet for aggression.

In this chapter and in the chapter that follows, you will be asked to read essays and study images that shed light on the relationship between media violence and violent behavior. In the process, you will learn critical-thinking and active reading strategies that will help you learn to examine and interpret texts and images.

Now that you understand the structure of an argumentative essay, you can turn your attention to reading arguments more closely. These arguments may be the subject of class discussion, or they may be source material for the essays you write. In any case, you will need to know how to get the most out of reading them.

Thinking Critically

When you **think critically**, you do not simply accept ideas at face value. Instead, you question these ideas, analyzing them in order to understand them better. You also challenge their underlying assumptions and form your own judgments about them. Throughout this book, discussions and readings encourage you to think critically. The box below shows you where in this text to find material that will help you develop your critical-thinking skills.

Using Critical-Thinking Skills

Reading (see Chapter 2): When you read a text, you use critical-thinking skills to help you understand what the text says and what it suggests. You ask questions and look for answers, challenging the ideas you read and probing for information. **previewing**, *highlighting*, and *annotating* are active reading strategies that require you to use critical-thinking skills.

Analyzing Visual Texts (see Chapter 3): When you examine an image, you use critical-thinking skills to help you understand what you are seeing, using previewing, highlighting, and annotating to help you analyze the image and interpret its persuasive message.

Writing a Rhetorical Analysis (see Chapter 4): When you write a rhetorical analysis of a text, you use critical-thinking skills to analyze its elements and to help you understand how the writer uses various appeals and rhetorical strategies to influence readers. Critical-thinking skills can also help you to understand the argument's context. Finally, you use critical-thinking skills to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the argument.

Analyzing an Argument's Logic (see Chapter 5): When you analyze an argument's logic, you use critical-thinking skills to help you understand the relationships among ideas and the form the argument takes as well as to determine whether its conclusions are both valid and true. You also use critical-thinking skills to identify any **logical fallacies** that may undermine the argument.

Writing an Essay (see Chapter 7): When you plan an essay, you use critical-thinking skills to probe a topic, to consider what you already know and what you need to find out, to identify your essay's main idea, and to decide how to support it—that is, which ideas to include and how to arrange them. As you draft and revise, you use critical-thinking skills to evaluate your

supporting evidence, to make sure your arguments are reasonable and fair, and to decide whether ideas are arranged effectively within paragraphs and in the essay as a whole. *Freewriting, brainstorming, clustering, and outlining* are activities that require you to use critical-thinking skills.

Refuting Opposing Arguments (see Chapter 7): When you refute opposing arguments, you use critical-thinking skills to identify and evaluate arguments against your position—and to challenge or possibly argue against them.

Evaluating Sources (see Chapter 8): When you evaluate sources, you use critical-thinking skills to assess your sources in terms of their *accuracy, credibility, objectivity, and comprehensiveness* and to determine whether a source is trustworthy and appropriate for your purpose and audience.

Summarizing (see Chapter 9): When you summarize a passage, you use critical-thinking skills to identify the writer's main idea.

Paraphrasing (see Chapter 9): When you paraphrase a passage, you use critical-thinking skills to identify the writer's main idea, the most important supporting details and examples, and the ways in which key ideas are related.

Synthesizing (see Chapter 9): When you synthesize, you use critical-thinking skills to analyze sources and integrate them with your own ideas.

Reading Critically

When you read an argument, you should approach it with a critical eye. Contrary to what you may think, **reading critically** does not mean arguing with every idea you encounter. What it does mean is commenting on, questioning, and evaluating these ideas.

As a critical reader, you do not simply accept that what you are reading is true. Instead, you assess the accuracy of the facts in your sources, and you consider whether opinions are convincingly supported by evidence. You try to judge the appropriateness and reliability of a writer's sources, and you evaluate the scope and depth of the evidence and the relevance of that evidence to the topic. You also consider opposing arguments carefully, weighing them against the arguments developed in your sources. Finally, you watch out for possible **bias** in your sources—and you work hard to keep your own biases in check.

GUIDELINES FOR READING CRITICALLY

As a critical reader, you need to read carefully, keeping the following guidelines in mind:

- Assess the accuracy of a source's information.
- Be sure opinions are supported convincingly.
- Evaluate the supporting evidence.
- Consider opposing arguments.
- Be on the lookout for bias—in your sources and in yourself.



LaunchPad

macmillan learning

For more practice, see the LearningCurve on Reading Critically in the LaunchPad for *Practical Argument*.

Becoming an Active Reader

Reading critically means being an active rather than a passive reader. Being an **active reader** means participating in the reading process by taking the time to preview a source and then to read it carefully, highlighting and annotating it. This process will prepare you to discuss the source with others and to respond in writing to what you have read.

Previewing

When you approach an argument for the first time, you **preview** it, skimming the argument to help you form a general impression of the writer's position on the issue, the argument's key supporting points, and the context for the writer's remarks.

Begin by looking at the title, the first paragraph (which often contains a thesis statement or overview), and the last paragraph (which often includes a concluding statement or a summary of the writer's key points). Also look at the topic sentences of the essay's body paragraphs. In addition, note any headings, words set in boldface or italic type, and bulleted or numbered lists in the body of the argument. If the argument includes visuals—charts, tables, graphs, photos, and so on—look at them as well. Finally, if an argument includes a headnote or background on the author or on the text, be sure to read this material. It can help you to understand the context in which the author is writing.

When you have finished previewing the argument, you should have a good general sense of what the writer wants to communicate.

Close Reading

Now, you are ready to read through the argument more carefully. As you read, look for words and phrases that help to shape the structure of the argument and signal the arrangement of the writer's ideas. These words and phrases will help you understand the flow of ideas as well as the content and emphasis of the argument.

COMPREHENSION CLUES

- Phrases that signal emphasis (the *primary* reason, the *most important* problem)
- Repeated words and phrases
- Words and phrases that signal addition (*also*, *in addition*, *furthermore*)

- Words and phrases that signal time sequence (*first, after that, next, then, finally*)
- Words and phrases that identify causes and effects (*because, as a result, for this reason*)
- Words and phrases that introduce examples (*for example, for instance*)
- Words and phrases that signal comparison (*likewise, similarly, in the same way*)
- Words and phrases that signal contrast (*although, in contrast, on the other hand*)
- Words and phrases that signal contradiction (*however, on the contrary*)
- Words and phrases that signal a move from general to specific (*in fact, specifically, in other words*)
- Words and phrases that introduce summaries or conclusions (*to sum up, in conclusion*)

➤ EXERCISE 2.1

“Violent Media Is Good for Kids” is an essay by Gerard Jones, a comic book writer and author of several books about popular media. In this essay, which begins on the following page, Jones argues that violent comic books and video games serve a useful function for young people.

In preparation for class discussion and other activities that will be assigned later in this chapter, preview the essay. Then, read it carefully, and answer the questions that follow it.

This article appeared in *Mother Jones* on June 28, 2000.

GERARD JONES

VIOLENT MEDIA IS GOOD FOR KIDS

At 13 I was alone and afraid. Taught by my well-meaning, progressive, English-teacher parents that violence was wrong, that rage was something to be overcome and cooperation was always better than conflict, I suffocated my deepest fears and desires under a nice-boy persona. Placed in a small, experimental school that was wrong for me, afraid to join my peers in their bumptious rush into adolescent boyhood, I withdrew into passivity and loneliness. My parents, not trusting the violent world of the late 1960s, built a wall between me and the crudest elements of American pop culture. 1



A scene from Gerard Jones and Will Jacobs's comic book *Monsters from Outer Space*.

© Gerard Jones, Gene Ha, Will Jacobs

Then the Incredible Hulk smashed through it. 2

One of my mother's students convinced her that Marvel Comics, despite their apparent juvenility and violence, were in fact devoted to lofty messages of pacifism and tolerance. My mother borrowed some, thinking they'd be good for me. And so they were. But not because they preached lofty messages of benevolence. They were good for me because they were juvenile. And violent. 3

The character who caught me, and freed me, was the Hulk: overgendered and undersocialized, half-naked and half-witted, raging against a frightened world that misunderstood and persecuted him. Suddenly I had a fantasy self to carry my stifled rage and buried desire for power. I had a fantasy self who was a self: unafraid of his desires and the world's disapproval, unhesitating and effective in action. "Puny boy follow Hulk!" roared my fantasy self, and I followed. 4

I followed him to new friends—other sensitive geeks chasing their own inner brutes—and I followed him to the arrogant, self-exposing, self-assertive, superheroic decision to become a writer. Eventually, I left him behind, followed more sophisticated heroes, and finally my own lead along a twisting path to a career and an identity. In my 30s, I found myself writing action movies and comic books. I wrote some Hulk stories, and met the geek-geniuses who created him. I saw my own creations turned into action figures, cartoons, and computer games. I talked to the kids who read my stories. Across generations, genders, and ethnicities I kept seeing the same story: people pulling themselves out of emotional traps by immersing themselves in violent stories. People integrating the scariest, most fervently denied fragments of their psyches into fuller senses of selfhood through fantasies of superhuman combat and destruction. 5

I have watched my son living the same story—transforming himself into a bloodthirsty dinosaur to embolden himself for the plunge into preschool, a Power Ranger to muscle through a social competition in kindergarten. In the first grade, his friends started climbing a tree at school. But he was afraid: of falling, of the centipedes crawling on the trunk, of sharp branches, of his friends' derision. I took my cue from his own fantasies and read him old Tarzan comics,

rich in combat and bright with flashing knives. For two weeks he lived in them. Then he put them aside. And he climbed the tree. 6

But all the while, especially in the wake of the recent burst of school shootings, I heard pop psychologists insisting that violent stories are harmful to kids, heard teachers begging parents to keep their kids away from “junk culture,” heard a guilt-stricken friend with a son who loved Pokémon lament, “I’ve turned into the bad mom who lets her kid eat sugary cereal and watch cartoons!” 7



A scene from Gerard Jones and Gene Ha's comic book *Oktane*.
© Gerard Jones, Gene Ha, Will Jacobs.

That's when I started the research. 8

“Fear, greed, power-hunger, rage: these are aspects of our selves that we try not to experience in our lives but often want, even need, to experience vicariously through stories of others,” writes Melanie Moore, Ph.D., a psychologist who works with urban teens. “Children need violent entertainment in order to explore the inescapable feelings that they’ve been taught to deny, and to re-integrate those feelings into a more whole, more complex, more resilient selfhood.” 9

Moore consults to public schools and local governments, and is also raising a daughter. For the past three years she and I have been studying the ways in which children use violent stories to meet their emotional and developmental needs—and the ways in which adults can help them use those stories healthily. With her help I developed *Power Play*, a program for helping young people improve their self-knowledge and sense of potency through heroic, combative storytelling. 10

We’ve found that every aspect of even the trashiest pop-culture story can have its own

developmental function. Pretending to have superhuman powers helps children conquer the feelings of powerlessness that inevitably come with being so young and small. The dual-identity concept at the heart of many superhero stories helps kids negotiate the conflicts between the inner self and the public self as they work through the early stages of socialization. Identification with a rebellious, even destructive, hero helps children learn to push back against a modern culture that cultivates fear and teaches dependency. 11

At its most fundamental level, what we call “creative violence”—head-bonking cartoons, bloody video games, playground karate, toy guns—gives children a tool to master their rage. Children will feel rage. Even the sweetest and most civilized of them, even those whose parents read the better class of literary magazines, will feel rage. The world is uncontrollable and incomprehensible; mastering it is a terrifying, enraging task. Rage can be an energizing emotion, a shot of courage to push us to resist greater threats, take more control, than we ever thought we could. But rage is also the emotion our culture distrusts the most. Most of us are taught early on to fear our own. Through immersion in imaginary combat and identification with a violent protagonist, children engage the rage they’ve stifled, come to fear it less, and become more capable of utilizing it against life’s challenges. 12

“Rage can be an energizing emotion.”

A Japanese cartoon series about magical girls

I knew one little girl who went around exploding with fantasies so violent that other moms would draw her mother aside to whisper, “I think you should know something about Emily....” Her parents were separating, and she was small, an only child, a tomboy at an age when her classmates were dividing sharply along gender lines. On the playground she acted out *Sailor Moon*^o fights, and in the classroom she wrote stories about people being stabbed with knives. The more adults tried to control her stories, the more she acted out the roles of her angry heroes: breaking rules, testing limits, roaring threats. 13

Then her mother and I started helping her tell her stories. She wrote them, performed them, drew them like comics: sometimes bloody, sometimes tender, always blending the images of pop culture with her own most private fantasies. She came out of it just as fiery and strong, but more self-controlled and socially competent: a leader among her peers, the one student in her class who could truly pull boys and girls together. 14



The title character of *Oktane* gets nasty.

© Gerard Jones, Gene Ha, Will Jacobs.

I worked with an older girl, a middle-class “nice girl,” who held herself together through a chaotic family situation and a tumultuous adolescence with gangsta rap. In the mythologized street violence of Ice T, the rage and strutting of his music and lyrics, she found a theater of the mind in which she could be powerful, ruthless, invulnerable. She avoided the heavy drug use that sank many of her peers, and flowered in college as a writer and political activist. 15

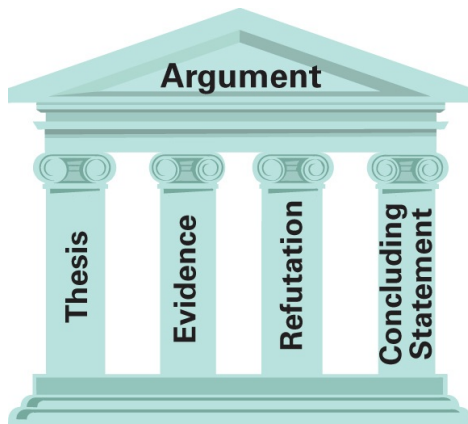
I’m not going to argue that violent entertainment is harmless. I think it has helped inspire some people to real-life violence. I am going to argue that it’s helped hundreds of people for every one it’s hurt, and that it can help far more if we learn to use it well. I am going to argue that our fear of “youth violence” isn’t well-founded on reality, and that the fear can do more harm than the reality. We act as though our highest priority is to prevent our children from growing up into murderous thugs—but modern kids are far more likely to grow up too passive, too distrustful of themselves, too easily manipulated. 16

We send the message to our children in a hundred ways that their craving for imaginary gun battles and symbolic killings is wrong, or at least dangerous. Even when we don’t call for censorship or forbid *Mortal Kombat*, we moan to other parents within our kids’ earshot about the “awful violence” in the entertainment they love. We tell our kids that it isn’t nice to play-fight, or we steer them from some monstrous action figure to a pro-social doll. Even in the most progressive households, where we make such a point of letting children feel what they feel, we rush to substitute an enlightened discussion for the raw material of rageful fantasy. In the process, we risk confusing them about their natural aggression in the same way the Victorians^o confused their children about their sexuality. When we try to protect our children from their own feelings and fantasies, we shelter them not against violence but against power and selfhood. 17

The people who lived during the reign of Victoria (1819–1901), queen of Great Britain and Ireland, who are often associated with prudish behavior.

Identifying the Elements of Argument

1. What is Jones's thesis? Restate it in your own words.
2. What arguments does Jones present as evidence in support of his thesis?
3. What arguments against his position does Jones identify? How does he refute them?
4. Paraphrase Jones's concluding statement.



Highlighting

After you read an argument, read through it again, this time highlighting as you read. When you **highlight**, you use underlining and symbols to identify the essay's most important points. (Note that the word *highlighting* does not necessarily refer to the underlining done with a yellow highlighter pen.) This active reading strategy will help you to understand the writer's ideas and to see connections among those ideas when you reread.

How do you know what to highlight? As a general rule, you look for the same signals that you looked for when you read the essay the first time—for example, the essay's thesis and topic sentences and the words and phrases that identify the writer's intent and emphasis. This time, however, you physically mark these elements and use various symbols to indicate your reactions to them.

SUGGESTIONS FOR HIGHLIGHTING

- Underline key ideas—for example, ideas stated in topic sentences
- Box or circle words or phrases you want to remember.
- Place a check mark or a star next to an important idea.
- Place a double check mark or double star next to an especially significant idea.
- Draw lines or arrows to connect related ideas.
- Write a question mark near an unfamiliar reference or a word you need to look up.
- Number the writer's key supporting points or examples.

📌 Here is how a student, Katherine Choi, highlighted the essay “When Life Imitates Video” by John Leo, which appears below. Choi was preparing to write an essay about the effects of media violence on children and adolescents. She began her highlighting by underlining and starring the thesis statement (para. 2). She then circled references to Leo’s two key examples, “Colorado massacre” (1) and “Paducah, Ky.” (7) and placed question marks beside them to remind herself to find out more about them. In addition, she underlined and starred some particularly important points (2, 8, 9) as well as what she identified as the essay’s concluding statement (11).

This essay first appeared in *U.S. News & World Report* on May 3, 1999.

JOHN LEO

WHEN LIFE IMITATES VIDEO

? Marching through a large building using various bombs and guns to pick off victims is a conventional video-game scenario. In the Colorado massacre, Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris used pistol-grip shotguns, as in some video-arcade games. The pools of blood, screams of agony, and pleas for mercy must have been familiar—they are featured in some of the newer and more realistic kill-for-kicks games. “With each kill,” the *Los Angeles Times* reported, “the teens cackled and shouted as though playing one of the morbid video games they loved.” And they ended their spree by shooting themselves in the head, the final act in the game *Postal*, and, in fact, the only way to end it. 1

* Did the sensibilities created by the modern, video kill games play a role in the Littleton massacre? Apparently so. Note the cool and casual cruelty, the outlandish arsenal of weapons, the cheering and laughing while hunting down victims one by one. All of this seems to reflect the style and feel of the video killing games they played so often. 2

No, there isn’t any direct connection between most murderous games and most murders. And yes, the primary responsibility for protecting children from dangerous games lies with their parents, many of whom like to blame the entertainment industry for their own failings. 3

But there is a cultural problem here: We are now a society in which the chief form of play for millions of youngsters is making large numbers of people die. Hurting and maiming others is the central fun activity in video games played so addictively by the young. A widely cited survey of 900 fourth- through eighth-grade students found that almost half of the children said their favorite electronic games involve violence. Can it be that all this constant training in make-believe killing has no social effects? 4

Dress rehearsal. The conventional argument is that this is a harmless activity among children who know the difference between fantasy and reality. But the games are often played by unstable youngsters unsure about the difference. Many of these have been maltreated or rejected and left alone most of the time (a precondition for playing the games obsessively). Adolescent feelings of resentment, powerlessness, and revenge pour into the killing games. In

these children, the games can become a dress rehearsal for the real thing. 5

Psychologist David Grossman of Arkansas State University, a retired Army officer, thinks “point and shoot” video games have the same effect as military strategies used to break down a soldier’s aversion to killing. During World War II, only 15 to 20 percent of all American soldiers fired their weapon in battle. Shooting games in which the target is a man-shaped outline, the Army found, made recruits more willing to “make killing a reflex action.” 6

? Video games are much more powerful versions of the military’s primitive discovery about overcoming the reluctance to shoot. Grossman says Michael Carneal, the schoolboy shooter in Paducah, Ky., showed the effects of video-game lessons in killing. Carneal coolly shot nine times, hitting eight people, five of them in the head or neck. Head shots pay a bonus in many video games. Now the Marine Corps is adapting a version of *Doom*, the hyperviolent game played by one of the Littleton killers, for its own training purposes. 7

* More realistic touches in video games help blur the boundary between fantasy and reality—guns carefully modeled on real ones, accurate-looking wounds, screams, and other sound effects, even the recoil of a heavy rifle. Some newer games seem intent on erasing children’s empathy and concern for others. Once the intended victims of video slaughter were mostly gangsters or aliens. Now some games invite players to blow away ordinary people who have done nothing wrong—pedestrians, marching bands, an elderly woman with a walker. In these games, the shooter is not a hero, just a violent sociopath. One ad for a Sony game says: “Get in touch with your gun-toting, testosterone-pumping, cold-blooded murdering side.” 8

* These killings are supposed to be taken as harmless over-the-top jokes. But the bottom line is that the young are being invited to enjoy the killing of vulnerable people picked at random. This looks like the final lesson in a course to eliminate any lingering resistance to killing. 9

SWAT teams and cops now turn up as the intended victims of some video-game killings. This has the effect of exploiting resentments toward law enforcement and making real-life shooting of cops more likely. This sensibility turns up in the hit movie *Matrix*: world-saving hero Keanu Reeves, in a mandatory Goth-style, long black coat packed with countless heavy-duty guns, is forced to blow away huge numbers of uniformed law-enforcement people. 10

* “We have to start worrying about what we are putting into the minds of our young,” says Grossman. “Pilots train on flight simulators, drivers on driv-ing simulators, and now we have our children on murder simulators.” If we want to avoid more Littleton-style massacres, we will begin taking the social effects of the killing games more seriously. 11

➔ EXERCISE 2.2

Look carefully at Katherine Choi’s highlighting of John Leo’s essay on [pages 68–70](#). How would your own highlighting of this essay be similar to or different from hers?

➔ EXERCISE 2.3

Reread “Violent Media Is Good for Kids” (pp. 64–67). As you read, highlight the essay by underlining and starring important points, boxing or circling key words, writing question marks beside references that need further explanation, or drawing lines and arrows to connect related ideas.

Annotating

As you highlight, you should also annotate what you are reading. **annotating** means making notes—of your questions, reactions, and ideas for discussion or writing—in the margins or between the lines. Keeping this kind of informal record of ideas as they occur to you will prepare you for class discussion and provide a useful source of material when you write.

As you read an argument and think critically about what you are reading, use the questions in the following checklist to help you make useful annotations.

CHECKLIST

Questions for Annotating

- What issue is the writer focusing on?
- Does the writer take a clear stand on this issue?
- What is the writer’s thesis?
- What is the writer’s purpose (his or her reason for writing)?
- What kind of audience is the writer addressing?
- Does the argument appear in a popular periodical or in a scholarly journal?
- Does the writer seem to assume readers will agree with the essay’s position?
- What evidence does the writer use to support the essay’s thesis? Does the writer include enough evidence?
- Does the writer consider (and refute) opposing arguments?
- Do you understand the writer’s vocabulary?
- Do you understand the writer’s references?
- Do you agree with the points the writer makes?
- Do the views the writer expresses agree or disagree with the views presented in other essays you have read?

↓ The following pages, which reproduce Katherine Choi’s highlighting of John Leo’s essay

on pages 68–70, also include her marginal annotations. In these annotations, Choi put Leo’s thesis and some of his key points into her own words and recorded a few questions that she intended to explore further. She also added notes to clarify his references to two iconic school shootings. Finally, she identified arguments against Leo’s position and his refutation of these arguments.

This essay first appeared in *U.S. News & World Report* on May 3, 1999.

JOHN LEO

WHEN LIFE IMITATES VIDEO

Columbine H.S., 1999

Marching through a large building using various bombs and guns to pick off victims is a conventional video-game scenario. In the Colorado massacre, Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris used pistol-grip shotguns, as in some video-arcade games. The pools of blood, screams of agony, and pleas for mercy must have been familiar—they are featured in some of the newer and more realistic kill-for-kicks games. “With each kill,” the *Los Angeles Times* reported, “the teens cackled and shouted as though playing one of the morbid video games they loved.” And they ended their spree by shooting themselves in the head, the final act in the game *Postal*, and, in fact, the only way to end it. 1

Thesis His position: “video kill games” can lead to violent behavior

Did the sensibilities created by the modern, video kill games play a role in the Littleton massacre? Apparently so. Note the cool and casual cruelty, the outlandish arsenal of weapons, the cheering and laughing while hunting down victims one by one. All of this seems to reflect the style and feel of the video killing games they played so often. 2

Opposing arguments

No, there isn’t any direct connection between most murderous games and most murders. And yes, the primary responsibility for protecting children from dangerous games lies with their parents, many of whom like to blame the entertainment industry for their own failings. 3

Refutation

True?

Date of survey?

(He means “training” does have negative effects, right?)

But there is a cultural problem here: We are now a society in which the chief form of play for millions of youngsters is making large numbers of people die. Hurting and maiming others is the central fun activity in video games played so addictively by the young. A widely cited

survey of 900 fourth- through eighth-grade students found that almost half of the children said their favorite electronic games involve violence. Can it be that all this constant training in make-believe killing has no social effects? 4

*Opposing argument
Refutation*

Dress rehearsal. The conventional argument is that this is a harmless activity among children who know the difference between fantasy and reality. But the games are often played by unstable youngsters unsure about the difference. Many of these have been maltreated or rejected and left alone most of the time (a precondition for playing the games obsessively). Adolescent feelings of resentment, powerlessness, and revenge pour into the killing games. In these children, the games can become a dress rehearsal for the real thing. 5

Quotes psychologist (= authority)

Psychologist David Grossman of Arkansas State University, a retired Army officer, thinks “point and shoot” video games have the same effect as military strategies used to break down a soldier’s aversion to killing. During World War II, only 15 to 20 percent of all American soldiers fired their weapon in battle. Shooting games in which the target is a man-shaped outline, the Army found, made recruits more willing to “make killing a reflex action.” 6

1997

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hero Keanu Reeves, in a mandatory Goth-style, long black coat packed with countless heavy-duty guns, is forced to blow away huge numbers of uniformed law-enforcement people. 10

Recommendation for action

* “We have to start worrying about what we are putting into the minds of our young,” says Grossman. “Pilots train on flight simulators, drivers on driving simulators, and now we have our children on murder simulators.” If we want to avoid more Littleton-style massacres, we will begin taking the social effects of the killing games more seriously. 11

➤ EXERCISE 2.4

Reread Gerard Jones’s “Violent Media Is Good for Kids” (pp. 64–67). As you read, refer to the “Questions for Annotating” checklist (p. 71), and use them as a guide as you write your own reactions and questions in the margins of Jones’s essay. In your annotations, note where you agree or disagree with Jones, and briefly explain why. Quickly summarize any points that you think are particularly important. Look up any unfamiliar words or references you have identified, and write down brief definitions or explanations. Think about these annotations as you prepare to discuss the Jones essay in class (and, eventually, to write about it).

➤ EXERCISE 2.5

Exchange books with another student, and read his or her highlighting and annotating. How are your written responses similar to the other student’s? How are they different? Do your classmate’s responses help you to see anything new about Jones’s essay?

➤ EXERCISE 2.6

The following letter to the editor of a college newspaper takes a position on the issue of how violent media—in this case, video games—influence young people. Read the letter, highlighting and annotating it.

Now, consider how this letter is similar to and different from Gerard Jones’s essay (pp. 64–67). First, identify the writer’s thesis, and restate it in your own words. Then, consider the benefits of the violent video games the writer identifies. Are these benefits the same as those Jones identifies?

In paragraph 4, the writer summarizes arguments against her position. Does Jones address any of these same arguments? If so, does he refute them in the same way this writer does? Finally, read the letter’s last paragraph. How is this writer’s purpose for writing different from Jones’s?

This letter to the editor was published on October 22, 2003, in *Ka Leo o Hawai'i*, the student newspaper of the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

JESSICA ROBBINS

DON'T WITHHOLD VIOLENT GAMES

Entertainment and technology have changed. Video games today are more graphic and violent than they were a few years ago. There is a concern about children being influenced by the content of some of these video games. Some states have already passed laws which ban minors from the viewing or purchasing of these video games without an accompanying adult. I believe this law should not exist. 1

Today's technology has truly enriched our entertainment experience. Today's computer and game consoles are able to simulate shooting, killing, mutilation, and blood through video games. It was such a problem that in 1993 Congress passed a law prohibiting the sale or rental of adult video games to minors. A rating system on games, similar to that placed on movies, was put into place, which I support. This helps to identify the level of violence that a game might have. However, I do not believe that this rating should restrict people of any age from purchasing a game. 2

Currently there is no significant evidence that supports the argument that violent video games are a major contributing factor in criminal and violent behavior. Recognized universities such as MIT and UCLA described the law as misguided, citing that "most studies and experiments on video games containing violent content have not found adverse effects." In addition, there actually are benefits from playing video games. They provide a safe outlet for aggression and frustration, increased attention performance, along with spatial and coordination skills. 3

"[T]here actually are benefits from playing video games."

Some argue that there is research that shows real-life video game play is related to antisocial behavior and delinquency, and that there is need for a law to prevent children from acting out these violent behaviors. This may be true, but researchers have failed to indicate that this antisocial and aggressive behavior is not mostly short-term. We should give children the benefit of the doubt. Today's average child is competent and intelligent enough to recognize the difference between the digital representation of a gun and a real 28-inch military bazooka rocket launcher. They are also aware of the consequences of using such weapons on real civilians. 4

Major software companies who create video games should write Congress and protest this law on the basis of a nonexistent correlation between violence and video games. If the law is modified to not restrict these games to a particular age group, then these products will not be unfairly singled out. 5

➤ EXERCISE 2.7

The following document, a statement on media violence released by the American Psychological Association (APA) in 2015, includes a list of specific recommendations. What position does this document take? Draft a thesis statement that summarizes this position. Then, consider how Gerard Jones (pp. 64–67) would respond to this thesis—and to the APA’s specific recommendations.

This document was posted to APA.org to replace the outdated 1985 resolution on violence on television.

AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

VIOLENCE IN MASS MEDIA

On the recommendation of the Board of Directors and the Board for the Advancement of Psychology in the Public Interest, Council voted to adopt the following resolution, as amended, as APA policy, replacing the 1985 resolution on television violence: 1

Whereas the consequences of aggressive and violent behavior have brought human suffering, lost lives, and economic hardship to our society as well as an atmosphere of anxiety, fear, and mistrust; 2

Whereas in recent years the level of violence in American society and the level of violence portrayed in television, film, and video have escalated markedly; 3

Whereas the great majority of research studies have found a relation between viewing mass media violence and behaving aggressively; 4

Whereas the conclusion drawn on the basis of over 30 years of research and a sizeable number of experimental and field investigations (Huston, et al., 1992; NIMH, 1982; Surgeon General, 1972) is that viewing mass media violence leads to increases in aggressive attitudes, values, and behavior, particularly in children, and has a long-lasting effect on behavior and personality, including criminal behavior; 5

Whereas viewing violence desensitizes the viewer to violence, resulting in calloused attitudes regarding violence toward others and a decreased likelihood to take action on behalf of a victim when violence occurs; 6

Whereas viewing violence increases viewers’ tendencies for becoming involved with or exposing themselves to violence; 7

Whereas viewing violence increases fear of becoming a victim of violence, with a resultant increase in self-protective behaviors and mistrust of others; 8

Whereas many children’s television programs and films contain some form of violence, and children’s access to adult-oriented media violence is increasing as a result of new technological advances; 9

Therefore be it resolved that the American Psychological Association: 10

1. urges psychologists to inform the television and film industry personnel who are responsible for violent programming, their commercial advertisers, legislators, and the

general public that viewing violence in the media produces aggressive and violent behavior in children who are susceptible to such effects;

2. encourages parents and other child care providers to monitor and supervise television, video, and film viewing by children;
3. supports the inclusion of clear and easy-to-use warning labels for violent material in television, video, and film programs to enable viewers to make informed choices;
4. supports the development of technologies that empower viewers to prevent the broadcast of violent material in their homes;
5. supports the development, implementation, and evaluation of school-based programs to educate children and youth regarding means for critically viewing, processing, and evaluating video and film portrayals of both aggressive and prosocial behaviors;
6. requests the television and film industry to reduce direct violence in “real life” fictional children’s programming or violent incidents in cartoons and other television or film productions, and to provide more programming designed to mitigate possible effects of television and film violence, consistent with the guarantees of the First Amendment;
7. urges the television and film industry to foster programming that models prosocial behaviors and seeks to resolve the problem of violence in society;
8. offers to the television and film industry assistance in developing programs that illustrate psychological methods to control aggressive and violent behavior, and alternative strategies for dealing with conflict and anger;
9. supports revision of the Film Rating System to take into account violence content that is harmful to children and youth;
10. urges industry, government, and private foundations to develop and implement programs to enhance the critical viewing skills of teachers, parents, and children regarding media violence and how to prevent its negative effects;
11. recommends that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) review, as a condition for license renewal, the programming and outreach efforts and accomplishments of television stations in helping to solve the problem of youth violence;
12. urges industry, government, and private foundations to support research activities aimed at the amelioration of the effects of high levels of mass media violence on children’s attitudes and behavior (DeLeon, 1995).

Writing a Critical Response

Sometimes you will be asked to write a **critical response**—a paragraph or more in which you analyze ideas presented in an argument and express your reactions to them.

Before you can respond in writing to an argument, you need to be sure that you understand the writer's position and that you have a sense of how supporting ideas are arranged—and why. You also need to consider how convincingly the writer conveys his or her position.

If you have read the argument carefully, highlighting and annotating it according to the guidelines outlined in this chapter, you should have a good idea what the writer wants to communicate to readers as well as how successfully the argument makes its point.

Before you begin to write a critical response to an argument, you should consider the questions in the checklist on [page 78](#).

Begin your critical response by identifying your source and its author; then, write a clear, concise summary of the writer's position. Next, analyze the argument's supporting points one by one, considering the strength of the evidence that is presented. Also consider whether the writer addresses all significant opposing arguments and whether those arguments are refuted convincingly. Quote, summarize, and paraphrase the writer's key points as you go along, being careful to quote accurately and not to misrepresent the writer's ideas or distort them by quoting out of context. (For information on summarizing, paraphrasing, quoting, and synthesizing sources, see [Chapter 9](#).) As you write, identify arguments you find unconvincing, poorly supported, or irrelevant. At the end of your critical response, sum up your assessment of the argument in a strong concluding statement.

CHECKLIST

Questions for Critical Reading

- What is the writer's general subject?
- What purpose does the writer have for presenting this argument?
- What is the writer's position?
- Does the writer support ideas mainly with facts or with opinion?
- What evidence does the writer present to support this position?
- Is the evidence convincing? Is there enough evidence?

- Does the writer present opposing ideas and refute them effectively?
- What kind of audience does the writer seem to be addressing?
- Does the writer see the audience as hostile, friendly, or neutral?
- Does the writer establish himself or herself as well informed? As a fair and reasonable person?
- Does the writer seem to exhibit bias? If so, how does this bias affect the argument?

📌 Katherine Choi, the student who highlighted and annotated “[When Life Imitates Video](#)” by John Leo (pp. 71–73), used those notes to help her develop the following critical response to Leo’s article.

KATHERINE CHOI

RESPONSE TO “WHEN LIFE IMITATES VIDEO”

Article’s source and author identified
Summary of writer’s position

In “When Life Imitates Video,” John Leo takes the position that “video kill games” (para. 2) can actually lead to violent behavior. In fact, he suggests a cause-and-effect connection between such games and the notorious 1999 murder spree at Colorado’s Columbine High School, which occurred shortly before Leo wrote his essay. 1

Analysis of supporting evidence

Although Leo acknowledges in paragraph 3 that there is no “direct connection” between video games and this crime and agrees that parents bear the “primary responsibility” for keeping violent games out of the hands of their children, he insists that our culture is also responsible. He is very critical of our society’s dependence on violent video games, which he considers “training in make-believe killing” (para 4). This argument is convincing, up to a point. The problem is that Leo’s primary support for this argument is a reference to an unnamed “widely cited survey” (para. 4), for which he provides no date. In addition, his use of a weak rhetorical question at the end of paragraph 4 instead of a strong statement of his position does little to help to support his argument. 2

Analysis of Leo’s discussion of an opposing argument

Leo cites an opposing argument at the beginning of paragraph 5—the “conventional

argument” that video games are harmless because children can tell the difference between fantasy and reality. He refutes this argument with unsupported generalizations rather than with specifics, pointing out the possibility that the games will often be played by “unstable youngsters” who channel their “adolescent feelings of resentment, powerlessness, and revenge” into the games. 3

Analysis of supporting evidence

The key piece of supporting evidence for Leo’s claim that video games are dangerous comes in paragraph 6 with the expert opinion of a psychology professor who is also a retired army officer. The professor, David Grossman, draws an analogy between adolescents’ video games and military training games designed to encourage soldiers to shoot their enemies. Although this analogy is interesting, it is not necessarily valid. For one thing, the army training Grossman refers to took place during World War II; for another, the soldiers were aware that the games were preparing them for actual combat. 4

Analysis of supporting evidence

In paragraph 7, Leo goes on to cite Grossman’s comments about the young shooter in a 1997 attack in Paducah, Kentucky, and the Marines’ use of *Doom* to train soldiers. Again, both discussions are interesting, and both are relevant to the connection between video games and violence. The problem is that neither discussion establishes a cause-and-effect relationship between violent video games and violent acts. 5

Concluding statement

It may be true, as Leo observes, that video games are becoming more and more violent and that the victims in these games are increasingly likely to be police officers. Still, Leo fails to make his point because he never establishes that real-life violence is also increasing; therefore, he is not able to demonstrate a causal connection. His concluding statement—“If we want to avoid more Littleton-style massacres, we will begin taking the social effects of the killing games more seriously”—combines a frightening prediction and a strong recommendation for action. Unfortunately, although Leo’s essay will frighten many readers, it does not convincingly establish the need for the action he recommends. 6

Work Cited

Leo, John. “When Life Imitates Video.” *Practical Argument*, 3rd ed., edited by Laurie G. Kirszner and Stephen R. Mandell. Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2017, pp. 68–70.

TEMPLATE FOR WRITING A CRITICAL RESPONSE

Write a one-paragraph critical response to Gerard Jones’s essay on [pages 64–67](#). Use the following template to shape your paragraph.

According to Gerard Jones, violent media can actually have positive effects on young people because

Jones also believes that violent media are a positive influence on children because

Jones makes some good points. For example, he says that

However,

All in all,

➤ EXERCISE 2.8

Expand the one-paragraph critical response that you wrote above into a more fully developed critical response to Gerard Jones's essay on [pages 64–67](#). Refer to the highlighting and annotations that you did for [Exercises 2.3](#) and [2.4](#). (If you like, you can expand your response with references to recent news events involving violent acts.)



© Gerard Jones, Gene Ha, Will Jacobs.

CHAPTER 3

Decoding Visual Arguments

AT ISSUE

Do Violent Media Images Trigger Violent Behavior? (continued)

In [Chapter 2](#), you read essays focusing on whether violence on TV and in other popular media can be blamed (at least in part) for the violence in our society. Now, you will be introduced to a variety of visual texts that offer additional insights into this issue. At the same time, you will learn how to use the critical-reading strategies that you practiced in [Chapter 2](#) to help you to **decode**, or interpret, visual texts and to use visuals as springboards for discussion and writing or as sources in your essays.

A **visual argument** can be an advertisement, a chart or graph or table, an infographic, a diagram, a Web page, a photograph, a drawing, or a painting. Like an argumentative essay, a visual argument can take a position. Unlike an argumentative essay, however, a visual argument communicates its position (and offers evidence to support that position) largely through images rather than words.

Thinking Critically about Visual Arguments

When you approach a visual argument—particularly one that will be the subject of class discussion or writing—you should do so with a critical eye. Your primary goal is to understand the point that the creator of the visual is trying to make, but you also need to understand how the message is conveyed. In addition, you need to evaluate whether the methods used to persuade the audience are both logical and convincing.

VISUALS VERSUS VISUAL ARGUMENTS

Not every visual is an argument; many simply present information. For example, a diagram of a hunting rifle, with its principal parts labeled, tells viewers what the weapon looks like and how it works. However, a photo of two toddlers playing with a hunting rifle could make a powerful argument about the need for gun safety. Conversely, a photo of a family hunting trip featuring a teenager proudly holding up a rifle while his parents look on approvingly might make a positive argument for access to guns.

Using Active Reading Strategies with Visual Arguments

As you learned in [Chapter 2](#), being a critical reader involves responding actively to the text of an argument. The active reading strategies that you practiced in [Chapter 2](#)—*previewing*, *close reading*, *highlighting*, and *annotating*—can also be applied to visual arguments.

When you approach a visual argument, you should look for clues to its main idea, or message. Some visuals, particularly advertising images, include words (sometimes called *body copy*) as well, and this written text often conveys the main ideas of the argument. Apart from words, however, the images themselves can help you understand the visual's purpose, its intended audience, and the argument that it is making.

COMPREHENSION CLUES

- The individual images
- The relative distance between images (close together or far apart)
- The relative size of the images
- The relationship between images and background
- The use of empty space
- The use of color and shading (for example, contrast between light and dark)
- If people are pictured, their activities, gestures, facial expressions, positions, body language, dress, and so on

APPEALS: LOGOS, PATHOS, AND ETHOS

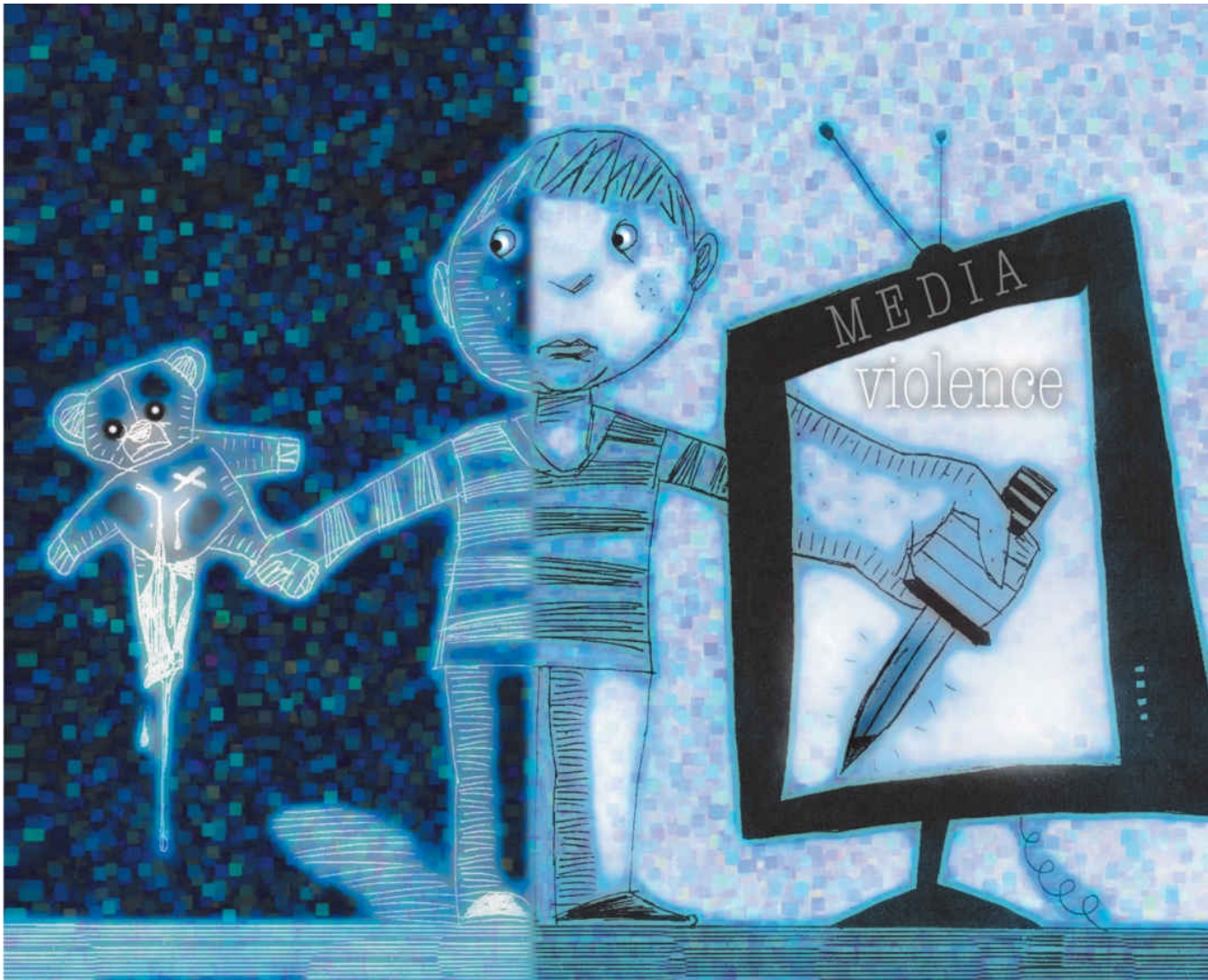
As you study a visual argument, you should consider the appeal (or appeals) that the visual uses to convince its audience.

- An ad produced by Mothers Against Drunk Drivers (MADD) that includes statistics about alcohol-related auto fatalities might appeal to logic (*logos*).
- Another MADD ad could appeal to the emotions (*Pathos*) by showing photographs of an accident scene.

- Still another ad could appeal to authority (*Ethos*) by featuring a well-known sports figure warning of the dangers of drunk driving.

(For more on these appeals, see pp. 14–21.)

The following illustration makes a strong visual argument, using the image of a young child holding a mutilated teddy bear to make an emotional appeal to those concerned about children's exposure to television violence.



This illustration by Todd Davidson first appeared in the *Age* newspaper, Melbourne, Australia, on March 22, 1998.

© Todd Davidson/Illustration Source

The visual on the previous page includes three dominant images: the child, the teddy bear, and a giant TV screen projecting an image of a hand holding a knife. The placement of the child in the center of the visual, with the teddy bear on one side and the knife on the other, suggests that the child (and, by extension, all children) is caught between the innocence of childhood and the violence depicted in the media. The hand holding the knife on the television screen is an extension of the child's actual arm, suggesting that the innocent world of the child is being

taken over by the violent world of the media.

To emphasize this conflict between innocence and violence, the teddy bear is set against a dark background, while the TV, with its disturbing image, is paradoxically set against a light background. (The image of the child is split, with half against each background, suggesting the split between the two worlds the child is exposed to.) The child's gaze is directed at his mutilated teddy bear, apparently the victim of his own violent act. The expression on the child's face makes it clear that he does not understand the violence he is caught up in.

Because it treats subject matter that is familiar to most people—TV violence and children's vulnerability to it—this visual is easy to understand. Its powerful images are not difficult to interpret, and its message is straightforward: TV violence is, at least in part, responsible for real-world violence. The visual's accessibility suggests that it is aimed at a wide general audience (rather than, for example, child psychologists or media analysts).

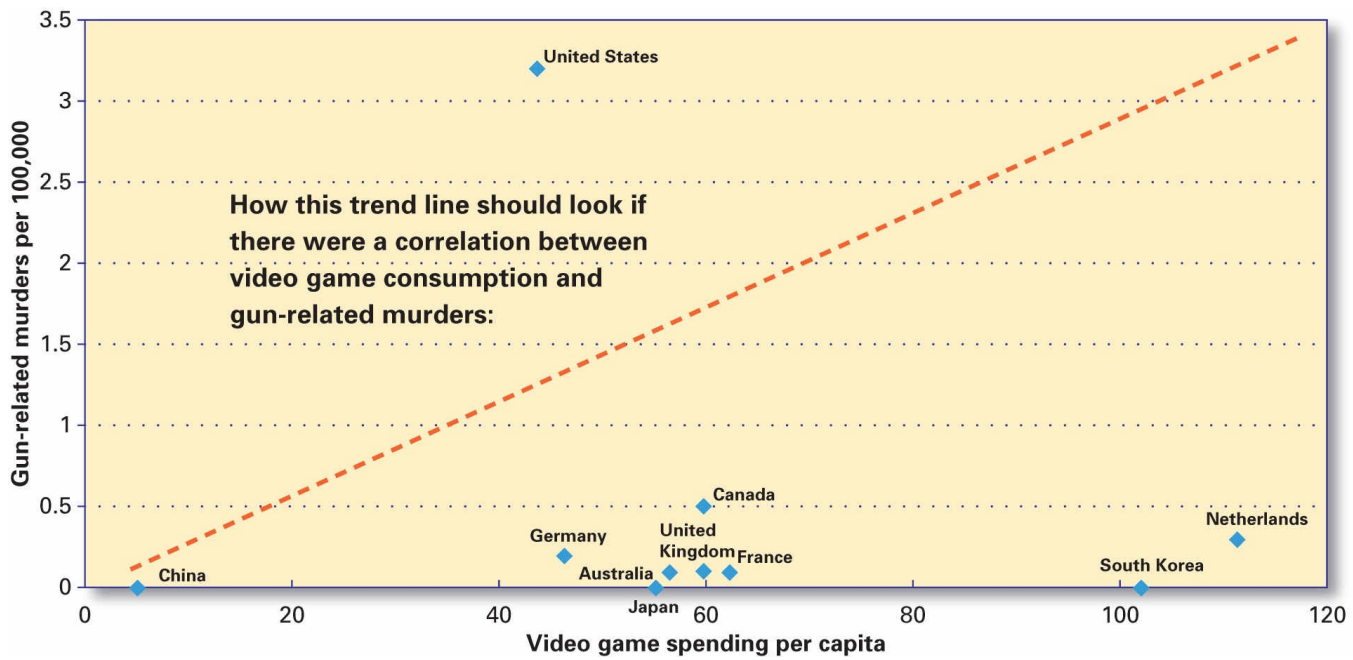
The visual's purpose is somewhat more complex. It could be to criticize the media, to warn parents and others about the threat posed by media violence, or to encourage the audience to take action.

Now, turn your attention to the two graphs on the facing page. These graphs, which appeared in the 2012 *Washington Post* article “Ten-Country Comparison Suggests There's Little or No Link between Video Games and Gun Murders,” by Max Fisher, appeal to logic by providing statistics as evidence to support the article's position. Thus, the graphs present a strong visual argument about the relationship between violent video games and crime—an argument that is more powerful than the argument the article alone would present.

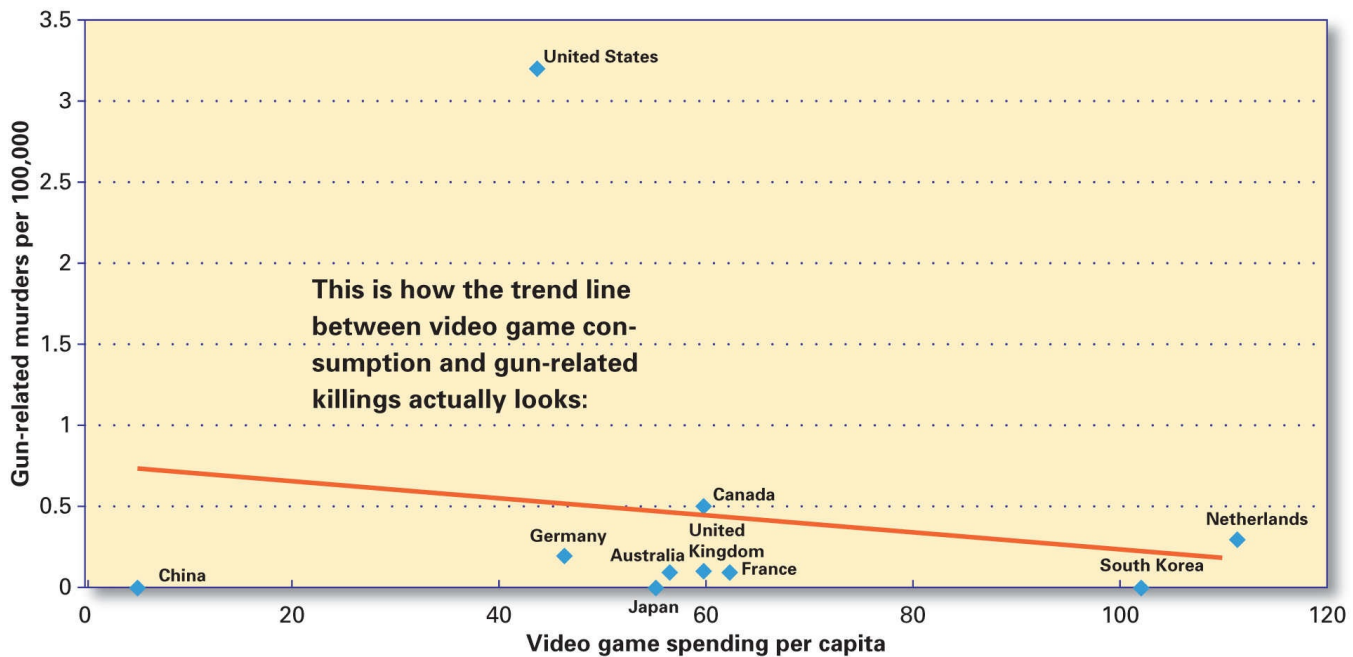
The graphs use a simple, open design and a minimum of words to make their information accessible to most people who will look at them. The main idea, or message, they convey is summarized by the article's thesis statement, supporting the idea that contrary to expectations, the data suggest “a slight downward shift in violence as video game consumption increases.”

This idea is likely to come as a surprise to most people, who might assume a causal relationship between violent video games and violent crime. However, as the graphs show, this is not the case. Thus, the graphs serve as a clear **refutation** of a commonly held assumption. Because the two graphs (and the article in which they appeared) present information that is intended to contradict the audience's probable assumptions, their purpose seems to be to convince people to change the way they look at video games.

GUN-RELATED MURDERS AND VIDEO GAME CONSUMPTION



GUN-RELATED MURDERS AND VIDEO GAME CONSUMPTION



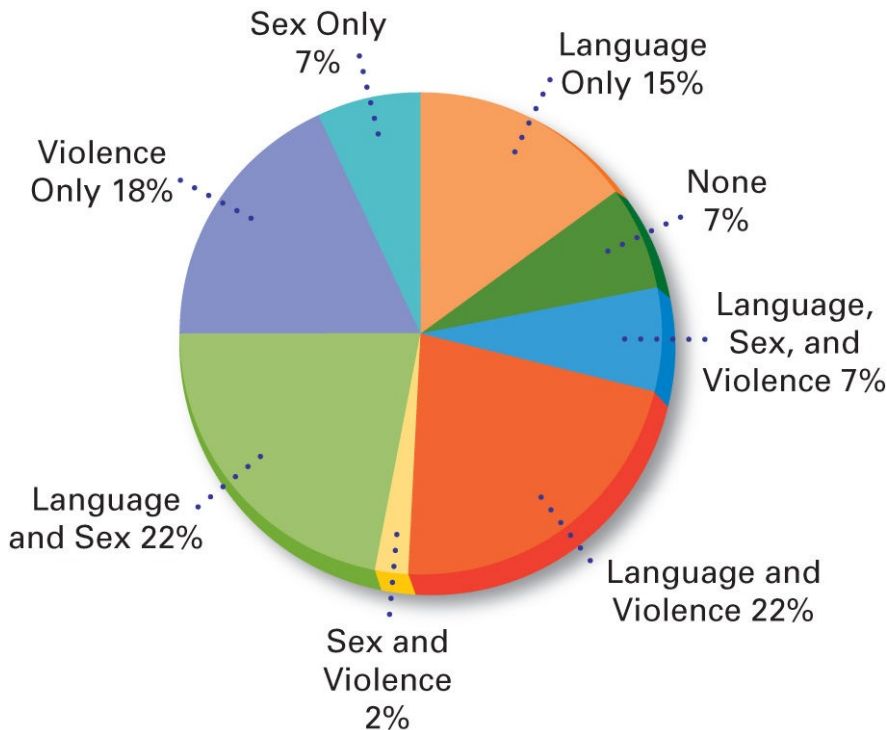
➤ EXERCISE 3.1

Look at the visuals on the pages that follow, and then answer the questions on [page 91](#).
Bob Engelhart, Violent Video Games



Bob Englehart. Courtesy of Cagle Cartoons.

Parthenood Library, Distribution of Language, Sex, and Violence Codes in PG-Rated Movies



From Amy I. Nathanson & Joanne Cantor (1998), Protecting Children from Harmful Television: TV Ratings and the V-Chip. From Parthenood in America, University of Wisconsin-Madison General Library System.

Boy Playing Violent Video Game



Jochen Tack/imageBROKER/Agefotostock

Ways to Die in Children's Cartoons

A study in the *British Medical Journal* indicated that two thirds of cartoon movies included the deaths of characters, compared with half in adult films. Parents are five times as likely to die in cartoon films compared with adult dramas.

Type of Death, by Percentage of Films

Type of death	Children's animated films	Comparison films
No on-screen deaths	33.3	50.0
Animal attacks	11.1	0
Falling	11.1	33.3
Other murder	8.9	4.4
Drowning	6.7	1.1
Gunshot	6.7	14.4
Magic	6.7	0
Illness / medical complications	4.4	8.9
Other injury	4.4	2.2
Stabbing/impaling	4.4	2.2
Motor vehicle crash	2.2	8.9

Killed in combat	0	3.3
Suicide	0	1.1

Lauren Dazzara, Why Gaming Is a Positive Element in Life

AN INFOGRAPHIC ON STATISTICS AND ETHICS ABOUT:

WHY GAMING IS A POSITIVE ELEMENT IN LIFE.

ONLY 9% OF UNDER 18 GAMERS ARE HARDCORE GAMERS..



63% OF PARENTS BELIEVE GAMING IS A POSITIVE PART OF THEIR KIDS LIVES



DESPITE THE RUMORS OF 'ALL KIDS' GETTING ADDICTED TO VIDEO GAMES.

DESPITE THE MAJORITY OF THE PRESS EXPLOITING ONLY PARENTS THAT ARE AGAINST THE MATTER.

W.O.W
IF ALL THE USERS OF WORLD OF WARCRAFT'S GAME TIME WAS ADDED TOGETHER IT WOULD AMOUNT TO:
5.9 MILLION YEARS.



38% OF HOMES IN THE USA HAVE A GAMING CONSOLE.

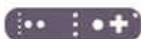
66% OF PARENTS THAT PLAY GAMES, DO SO WITH THEIR KIDS PURELY TO SOCIALISE WITH THEM



ALTHOUGH MOST PEOPLE ASSUME THAT THE TOP SELLING GAMES ARE VIOLENT SHOOTERS



THEN FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT GAMES IN 2ND AT 17.6%



THEN SPORTS GAMES IN AT 3RD AT 14%



56% OF ALL GAMERS ARE MALE



44% OF ALL GAMERS ARE FEMALE

GAMING CAN RESULT IN IMPROVED SKILLS SUCH AS:

COLLABORATION
&
PROBLEM SOLVING

IT'S BEEN SAID THAT PEOPLE DEVELOP STRONGER RELATIONSHIPS ONLINE THAN IN REAL LIFE

83% OF THE TIME WHEN KIDS BUY GAMES, THEY RECEIVE PERMISSION BEFORE HAND.

IN GAMING YOU RECIEVE RAPID FREQUENT FEEDBACK INVOLVING SUCH ELEMENTS AS



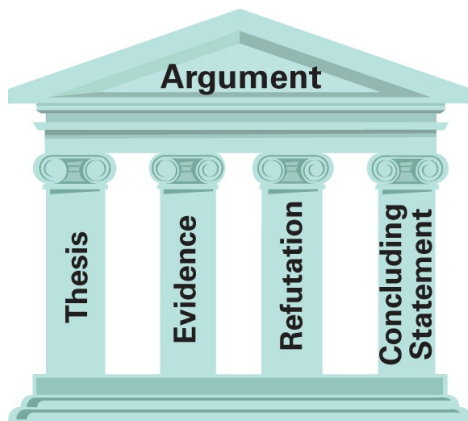
HEALTH BARS & EXPERIENCE

Level up!

CONSTANTLY MEASURING YOUR PROGRESS

Identifying the Elements of a Visual Argument

1. Do you see all of the visuals on [pages 87–90](#) as arguments, or do you think some were created solely to present information?
2. What main idea, or message, does each visual communicate? State the main idea of each visual in a single sentence.
3. What elements in each visual support this main idea?
4. If the visual includes words as well as images, are the words necessary?
5. What purpose does each visual seem designed to achieve?
6. What kind of audience do you think each visual is aimed at?
7. Does the visual appeal primarily to *logos*, *pathos*, or *ethos*?
8. Do you think the visual is effective? That is, is it likely to have the desired effect on its intended audience?



Highlighting and Annotating Visuals

Now, it is time to look more closely at visuals and to learn how to *highlight* and *annotate* them. Unlike highlighting and annotating a written text, marking a visual text involves focusing your primary attention not on any words that appear but on the images.

After previewing the visual by looking at its overall appearance, begin highlighting to identify key images—perhaps by starring, boxing, or circling them—and then consider drawing lines or arrows to connect related images. Next, go on to make annotations on the visual, commenting on the effectiveness of its individual images in communicating the message of the whole. As in the case of a written text, your annotations can be in the form of comments or questions.

📌 The visual on the following page shows how a student, Jason Savona, highlighted and annotated an advertisement for *Grand Theft Auto IV*, a popular violent video game.

Rockstar North, Advertisement for *Grand Theft Auto IV*



© The Advertising Archives

➤ EXERCISE 3.2

Look at the visual on the following page, and then highlight and annotate it to identify its most important images and their relationship to one another. When you have finished, think about

how the images work together to communicate a central message to the audience. What argument does this visual make?



© Nate Londa

➔ EXERCISE 3.3

Interview a classmate about his or her experiences with video games—or with actual violence. Does your classmate see any links between the kinds of videos that are watched by friends and family members and the violence (or lack of violence) that occurs in his or her community? Write a paragraph summarizing your interview.

➔ EXERCISE 3.4

Study the following three visuals (and their captions), all of which appear in Gerard Jones’s essay, “Violent Media Is Good for Kids” (pp. 64–67). Look at each visual with a critical eye, and then consider how effectively each one supports the central argument that Jones makes in his essay.

A scene from Gerard Jones and Will Jacobs’s comic book *Monsters from Outer Space*.



© Gerard Jones, Gene Ha, Will Jacobs.

A scene from Gerard Jones and Gene Ha's comic book Oktane.



© Gerard Jones, Gene Ha, Will Jacobs.

The title character of Oktane gets nasty.



© Gerard Jones, Gene Ha, Will Jacobs.

Responding Critically to Visual Arguments

As you learned in [Chapter 2](#), a **critical response** analyzes the ideas in a text and expresses your reactions to them. When you respond in writing to a visual argument, you rely on your highlighting and annotations to help you understand the writer's ideas and see how the words and images work together to make a particular point.

As you prepare to write a critical response to a visual argument, keep in mind the questions in the following checklist.

CHECKLIST

Questions for Responding to Visual Arguments

- In what source did the visual appear? What is the target audience for this source?
- For what kind of audience was the visual created? Hostile? Friendly? Neutral?
- For what purpose was the visual created?
- Who (or what organization) created the visual? What do you know about the background and goals of this person or group?
- What issue is the visual addressing?
- What position does the visual take on this issue? How can you tell? Do you agree with this position?
- Does the visual include words? If so, are they necessary? What points do they make? Does the visual need more—or different—written text?
- Does the visual seem to be a *refutation*—that is, an argument against a particular position?
- Is the visual effective? Attractive? Interesting? Clear? Convincing?

When you write a critical response, begin by identifying the source and purpose of the visual. Then, state your reaction to the visual, and examine its elements one at a time, considering how effective each is and how well the various elements work together to create a

convincing visual argument. End with a strong concluding statement that summarizes your reaction.

📌 The critical response that follows was written by the student who highlighted and annotated the advertisement for *Grand Theft Auto IV* on page 92.

JASON SAVONA

RESPONSE TO GRAND THEFT AUTO IV

Identification of visual's source

Reaction to visual

The advertisement for *Grand Theft Auto IV* presents a disturbing preview of the game. Rather than highlighting the game's features and challenges, this ad promotes the game's violence. As a result, it appeals more to those who are looking for video games that depict murder and other crimes than to those who choose a video game on the basis of the skill it requires. 1

Analysis of visual's elements

The “hero” of this game is Niko Bellic, a war veteran from Eastern Europe who has left his country to build a new life in the fictional Liberty City. Instead of finding peace, he has found a new kind of war. Now, trapped in the corrupt world of organized crime, Bellic is willing to do whatever it takes to fight his way out. His idea of justice is vigilante justice: he makes his own rules. The ad conveys this sense of Bellic as a loner and an outsider by showing him as a larger-than-life figure standing tall and alone against a background of the Liberty City skyline. 2

In the ad, Niko Bellic holds a powerful weapon in his huge hands, and the weapon extends higher than the tallest building behind it, dominating the picture. Clearly, Bellic means business. As viewers look at the picture, the dark image of the gun and the man who holds it comes to the foreground, and everything else—the light brown buildings, the city lights, the yellow sky—fades into the background. In the center, the name of the game is set in large black-and-white type that contrasts with the ad's hazy background, showing the importance of the product's name. 3

Concluding statement

This image, clearly aimed at young players of violent video games, would certainly be appealing to those who want to have a feeling of power. What it says is, “A weapon makes a person powerful.” This is a very dangerous message. 4

TEMPLATE FOR RESPONDING TO VISUAL ARGUMENTS

Write a one-paragraph critical response to the visual you highlighted and annotated in [Exercise 3.2](#) on pages 92–93. Use the following template to shape your paragraph.

The visual created by Nate Londa shows _____
_____ This visual
makes a powerful statement about _____
_____ The central image shows

_____ The background enhances the central image
because _____

_____ The visual includes words as well as
images. These words suggest _____

The goal of the organization that posted the visual seems to be
to _____

_____ The visual (is / is not) effective
because _____

➔ EXERCISE 3.5

Consulting the one-paragraph critical response that you wrote above, write a more fully developed critical response to the visual on page 93. Refer to the highlighting and annotating that you did for [Exercise 3.2](#).



CHAPTER 4

Writing a Rhetorical Analysis

AT ISSUE

Is It Ethical to Buy Counterfeit Designer Merchandise?

The demand for counterfeit designer merchandise—handbags, shoes, and jewelry—has always been great. Wishing to avoid the high prices of genuine designer goods, American consumers spend hundreds of millions of dollars per year buying cheap imitations that are made primarily in factories in China (and in other countries as well). According to United States Customs and Border Protection statistics, the counterfeit goods seized in 2013 had a retail value of over \$1.7 billion. In 2014, that figure went down to \$1.2 billion, but much more counterfeit merchandise gets into the United States than is seized. However hard they try, law enforcement officials cannot seem to stem the tide of counterfeit merchandise that is sold in stores, in flea markets, and by street vendors as well as through the Internet. As long as people want these illegal goods, there will be a market for them.

Purchasing counterfeit designer goods is not a victimless crime, however. Buyers are stealing the intellectual property of legitimate businesses that, unlike the manufacturers of fakes, pay their employees fair wages and provide good working conditions. In addition, because counterfeit goods are of low quality, they do not last as long as the genuine articles. This is not a serious problem when people are buying fake watches and handbags, but it can be life threatening when the counterfeit products include pharmaceuticals, tools, baby food, or automobile parts.

Later in this chapter, you will read a rhetorical analysis of an essay that takes a position on this issue, and you will be asked to write a rhetorical analysis of your own about another essay on this topic.

What Is a Rhetorical Analysis?

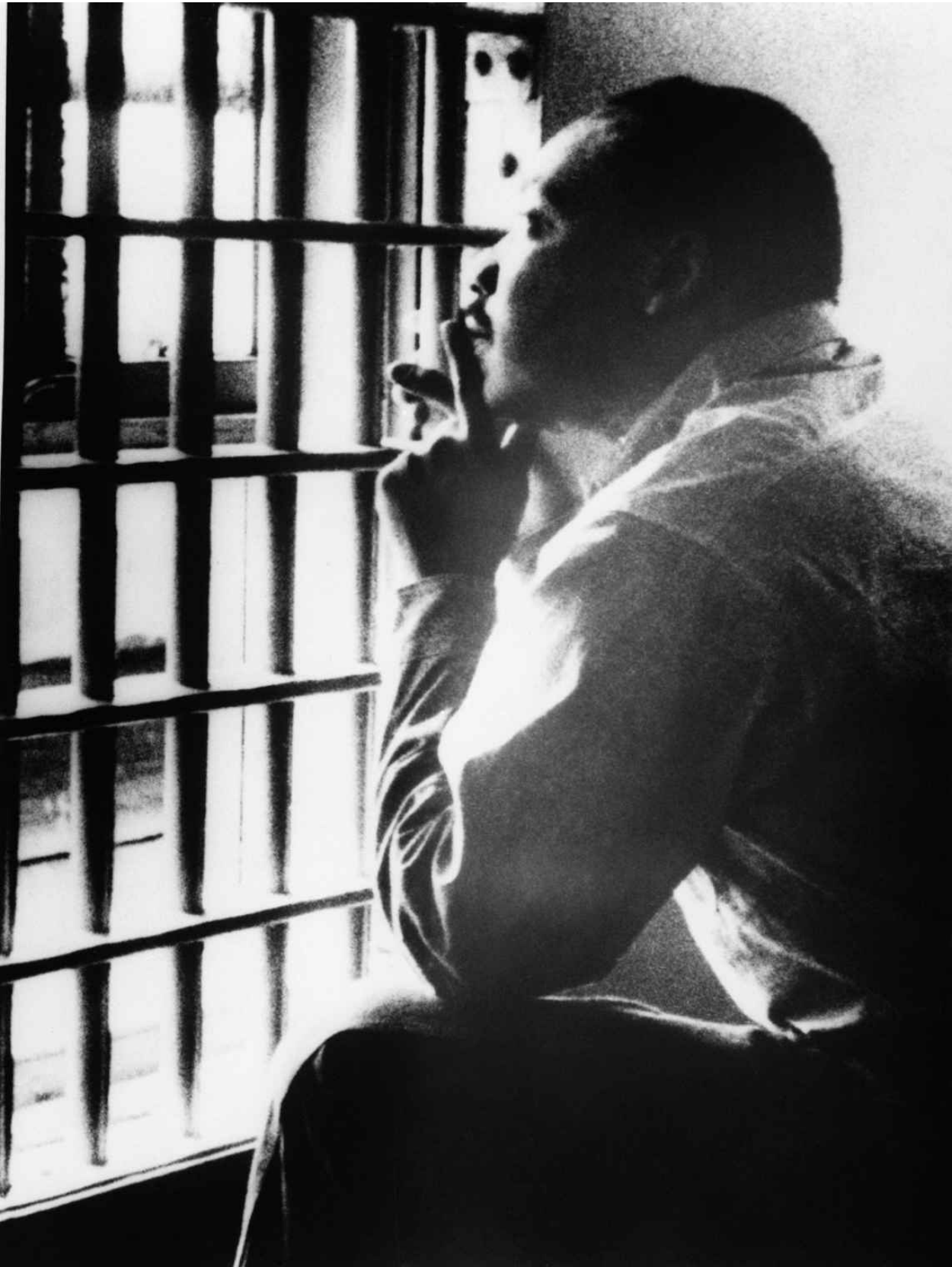
When you write a **rhetorical analysis**, you systematically examine the strategies a writer employs to achieve his or her purpose. In the process, you explain how these strategies work together to create an effective (or ineffective) argument. To carry out this task, you consider the argument's **rhetorical situation**, the writer's **means of persuasion**, and the **rhetorical strategies** that the writer uses.

OVERVIEW: “LETTER FROM BIRMINGHAM JAIL” BY MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

Here and throughout the rest of this chapter, we will be analyzing “Letter from Birmingham Jail” by Martin Luther King Jr., which can be found online.

In 1963, civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. organized a series of nonviolent demonstrations to protest the climate of segregation that existed in Birmingham, Alabama. He and his followers met opposition not only from white moderates but also from some African-American clergymen who thought that King was a troublemaker. During the demonstrations, King was arrested and jailed for eight days. He wrote his “Letter from Birmingham Jail” on April 16, 1963, from the city jail in response to a public statement by eight white Alabama clergymen titled “A Call for Unity.” This statement asked for an end to the demonstrations, which the clergymen called “untimely,” “unwise,” and “extreme.” (Their letter was addressed to the “white and Negro” population of Birmingham, not to King, whom they considered an “outsider.”)

King knew that the world was watching and that his response to the white clergymen would have both national and international significance. As a result, he used a variety of rhetorical strategies to convince readers that his demands were both valid and understandable and that contrary to the opinions of some, his actions were well within the mainstream of American social and political thought. Today, King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail” stands as a model of clear and highly effective argumentation.



Martin Luther King Jr. in Birmingham Jail (April 1963)

© Bettmann/Corbis

Considering the Rhetorical Situation

Arguments do not take place in isolation. They are written by real people in response to a particular set of circumstances called the **rhetorical situation** (see pp. 9–14). The rhetorical situation consists of the following five elements:

- The writer
- The writer's purpose
- The writer's audience
- The question
- The context

By analyzing the rhetorical situation, you are able to determine why the writer made the choices he or she did and how these choices affect the argument.

ANALYZING THE RHETORICAL SITUATION

To help you analyze the rhetorical situation of an argument, look for information about the essay and its author.

1. **Look at the essay's headnote.** If the essay you are reading has a headnote, it can contain useful information about the writer, the issue being discussed, and the structure of the essay. For this reason, it is a good idea to read headnotes carefully.
2. **Look for clues within the essay.** The writer's use of particular words and phrases can sometimes provide information about his or her preconceptions as well as about the cultural context of the argument. Historical or cultural references can indicate what ideas or information the writer expects readers to have.
3. **Search the Web.** Often, just a few minutes online can give you a lot of useful information—such as the background of a particular debate or the biography of the writer. By looking at titles of the other books or essays the writer has written, you may also be able to get an idea of his or her biases or point of view.

The Writer

Begin by trying to determine whether anything in the writer’s background (for example, the writer’s education, experience, race, gender, political beliefs, religion, age, and experiences) has influenced the content of the argument. Also consider whether the writer seems to have any preconceptions about the subject.

ANALYZING THE WRITER

- What is the writer’s background?
- How does the writer’s background affect the content of the argument?
- What preconceptions about the subject does the writer seem to have?

If you were analyzing “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” it would help to know that Martin Luther King Jr. was pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama. In 1956, he organized a bus boycott that led to a United States Supreme Court decision that outlawed segregation on Alabama’s buses. In addition, King was a leader of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and strongly believed in nonviolent protest. His books include *Stride towards Freedom* (1958) and *Why We Can’t Wait* (1964). His “I Have a Dream” speech, which he delivered on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial on August 28, 1963, is considered by scholars to be one of the most influential speeches of the twentieth century. In 1964, King won the Nobel Prize for peace.

In “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” King addresses the injustices that he sees in America—especially in the South—and makes a strong case for civil rights for all races. Throughout his argument, King includes numerous references to the Bible, to philosophers, and to political and religious thinkers. By doing so, he makes it clear to readers that he is aware of the social, cultural, religious, and political implications of his actions. Because he is a clergyman, King suggests that by battling in-justice, he, like the apostle Paul, is doing God’s work. This point is made clear in the following passage (para. 3):



“I Have a Dream” speech, Washington, D.C. (August 1963)
Hulton-Deutsch Collection/Corbis

But more basically, I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. Just as the prophets of the eighth century B.C. left their villages and carried their “thus saith the Lord” far beyond the boundaries of their home towns, and just as the Apostle Paul left his village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to the far corners of the Greco-Roman world, so am I compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my own home town. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid.

The Writer’s Purpose

Next, consider what the writer hopes to achieve with his or her argument. In other words, ask yourself if the writer is trying to challenge people’s ideas, persuade them to accept new points of view, or influence their behavior.

ANALYZING THE WRITER’S PURPOSE

- Does the writer state his or her purpose directly, or is the purpose implied?
- Is the writer’s purpose simply to convince or to encourage action?

- Does the writer rely primarily on logic or on emotion?
- Does the writer have a hidden agenda?

It is clear that Martin Luther King Jr. wrote “Letter from Birmingham Jail” to convince readers that even though he had been arrested, his actions were both honorable and just. To get readers to understand that, like Henry David Thoreau, he is protesting laws that he considers wrong, he draws a distinction between just and unjust laws. For him, a law is just if it “squares with the moral law or the law of God” (16). A law is unjust if it “is out of harmony with the moral law” (16). As a clergyman and a civil rights leader, King believed that he had an obligation both to point out the immorality of unjust laws and to protest them—even if it meant going to jail.

The Writer’s Audience

To analyze the writer’s audience, begin by considering whether the writer seems to see readers as friendly, hostile, or neutral. (For a discussion of types of audiences, see [pp. 10–13](#)). Also, determine how much knowledge the writer assumes that readers have. Then, consider how the writer takes into account factors like the audience’s race, religion, gender, education, age, and ethnicity. Next, decide what preconceptions the writer thinks readers have about the subject. Finally, see if the writer shares any common ground with readers.

ANALYZING THE WRITER’S AUDIENCE

- Who is the writer’s intended audience?
- Does the writer see the audience as informed or uninformed?
- Does the writer see the audience as hostile, friendly, or neutral?
- What values does the writer think the audience holds?
- What does the writer seem to assume about the audience’s background?
- On what points do the writer and the audience agree? On what points do they disagree?

In “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” King aims his argument at more than one audience. First, he speaks directly to eight clergymen from Birmingham, who are at worst a hostile audience and at best a skeptical one. They consider King to be an outsider whose actions are “unwise and untimely” (1). Before addressing their concerns, King tries to establish common ground, referring to his readers as “fellow clergymen” and “my Christian and Jewish brothers.” He then goes on to say that he wishes that the clergymen had supported his actions instead of criticizing

them. King ends his letter on a conciliatory note by asking his readers to forgive him if he has overstated his case or been unduly harsh.

In addition to addressing clergymen, King also speaks to white moderates, who he assumes are sympathetic to his cause but concerned about his methods. He knows that he has to influence this segment of his audience if he is to gain wide support for his cause. For this reason, King uses a restrained tone and emphasizes the universality of his message, ending his letter with a plea that is calculated to console and inspire those people who need reassurance (50):

Let us all hope that the dark clouds of racial prejudice will soon pass away and the deep fog of misunderstanding will be lifted from our fear-drenched communities, and in some not too distant tomorrow the radiant stars of love and brotherhood will shine over our great nation with all their scintillating beauty.

The Question

Try to determine what question the writer is trying to answer. Is the question suitable for argument? Decide if there are good arguments on both sides of the issue. For example, what issue (or issues) is the writer confronting? Does he or she address them adequately?

ANALYZING THE QUESTION

- What is the central question of the argument?
- Are there solid arguments on both sides of the issue?
- Has the writer answered the question fully enough?

The question King attempts to answer in “Letter from Birmingham Jail” is why he has decided to come to Birmingham to lead protests. Because the answer to this question is complicated, King addresses a number of issues. Although his main concern is with racial segregation in Alabama, he also is troubled by the indifference of white moderates who have urged him to call off his protests. In addition, he feels that he needs to explain his actions (for example, engaging in nonviolent protests) and address those who doubt his motives. King answers his critics (as well as his central question) by saying that because the people of the United States are interconnected, the injustices in one state will eventually affect the entire country.

The Context

The **context** is the situation that creates the need for the argument. As you analyze an argument, try to determine the social, historical, economic, political, and cultural events that set the stage

for the argument and the part that these events play in the argument itself.

ANALYZING THE CONTEXT

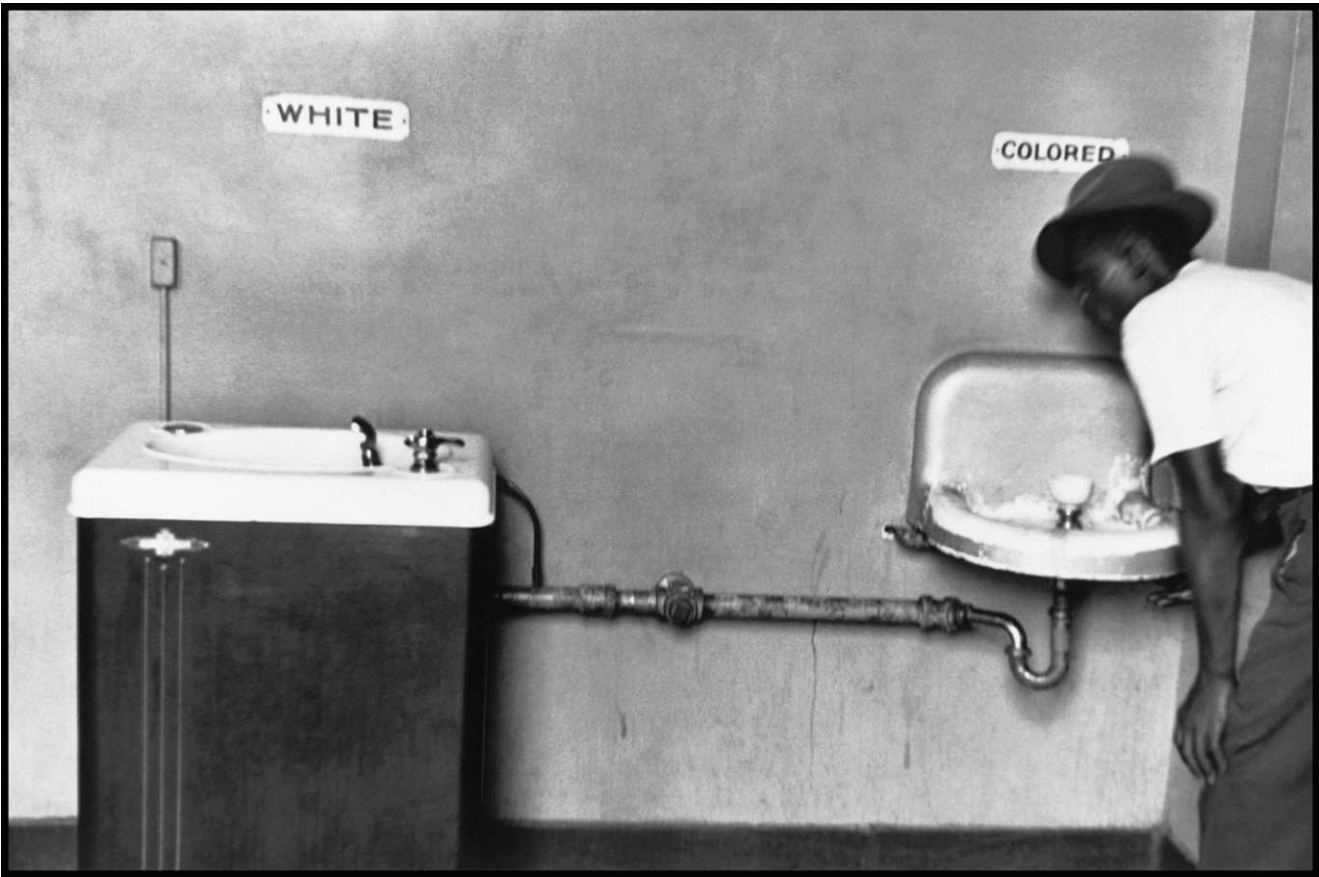
- What situation (or situations) set the stage for the argument?
- What social, economic, political, and cultural events triggered the argument?
- What historical references situate this argument in a particular place or time?

The immediate context of “Letter to Birmingham Jail” is well known: Martin Luther King Jr. wrote an open letter to eight white clergymen in which he defended his protests against racial segregation. However, the wider social and political context of the letter is less well known.

In 1896, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Plessy v. Ferguson* that “separate but equal” accommodations on railroad cars gave African Americans the equal protection guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Well into the twentieth century, this decision was used to justify separate public facilities—including restrooms, water fountains, and even schools and hospitals—for blacks and whites.

In the mid-1950s, state support for segregation of the races and discrimination against African Americans had begun to be challenged. For example, Supreme Court decisions in 1954 and 1955 found that segregation in the public schools and other publicly financed locations was unconstitutional. At the same time, whites and blacks alike were calling for an end to racial discrimination. Their actions took the form of marches, boycotts, and sit-ins (organized nonviolent protests whose participants refused to move from a public area). Many whites, however, particularly in the South, strongly resisted any sudden changes in race relations.

King’s demonstrations in Birmingham, Alabama, took place within this larger social and political context. His campaign was a continuation of the push for equal rights that had been gaining momentum in the United States for decades. King, along with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, had dispatched hundreds of people to Birmingham to engage in nonviolent demonstrations against those who were determined to keep African Americans from gaining their full rights as citizens.



Segregated water fountains in North Carolina (1950)
© Elliott Erwitt/Magnum

Considering the Means of Persuasion: *Logos, Pathos, Ethos*

In the introduction to this book, you learned how writers of argument use three means of persuasion—*Logos*, *Pathos*, and *Ethos*—to appeal to readers. You also saw how the **rhetorical triangle** represents the way these three appeals come into play within an argument. (See p. 19 for more information about the rhetorical triangle.) Of course, the degree to which a writer uses each of these appeals depends on the rhetorical situation. Moreover, a single argument can use more than one appeal—for example, an important research source would involve both the logic of the argument (*logos*) and the credibility of the writer (*ethos*). In “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” King uses all three appeals.

The Appeal to Reason (Logos)

In “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” King attempts to demonstrate the logic of his position. In paragraph 15, for example, he says that there are two types of laws—just and unjust. He then points out that he has both a legal and a moral responsibility to “disobey unjust laws.” In paragraph 16, King supports his position with references to various philosophers and theologians—for example, St. Thomas Aquinas, Martin Buber, and Paul Tillich. He also develops the logical argument that even though all Americans should obey the law, they are responsible to a higher moral authority—God.

The Appeal to the Emotions (Pathos)

Throughout “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” King attempts to create sympathy for his cause. In paragraph 14, for example, he catalogues the injustices of life in the United States for African Americans. He makes a particularly emotional appeal by quoting a hypothetical five-year-old boy who might ask, “Daddy, why do white people treat colored people so mean?” In addition, he includes vivid images of racial injustice to provoke anger against those who deny African Americans equal rights. In this way, King creates sympathy (and possibly empathy) in readers.

The Appeal to Authority (Ethos)

To be persuasive, King has to establish his credibility. In paragraph 2, for example, he reminds readers that he is the president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, “an organization operating in every southern state.” In paragraph 3, he compares himself to the apostle Paul, who carried the gospel “to the far corners of the Greco-Roman world.” In addition,

King attempts to show readers that what he is doing is well within the mainstream of American political and social thought. By alluding to Thomas Jefferson, Henry David Thoreau, and the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision that outlawed segregation in public schools, he tries to demonstrate that he is not the wild-eyed radical that some believe him to be. Thus, King establishes himself in both secular and religious terms as a leader who has the stature and the authority to present his case.

Considering the Writer’s Rhetorical Strategies

Writers use various **rhetorical strategies** to present their ideas and opinions. Here are a few of the elements that you should examine when analyzing and evaluating an argument.

Thesis

The **thesis**—the main idea or claim that the argument supports—is of primary importance in every argument. When you analyze an argument, you should always ask, “What is the essay’s thesis, and why does the writer state it as he or she does?” You should also consider at what point in the argument the thesis is stated and what the effect of this placement is.

In “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” Martin Luther King Jr. begins by telling readers that he is “confined here in the Birmingham city jail” and that he is writing his letter to answer clergymen who have called his demonstrations “unwise and untimely.” King clearly (and unapologetically) states his thesis (“But more basically, I am in Birmingham because injustice is here”) at the beginning of the third paragraph, right after he explains his purpose, so that readers will have no doubt what his position is as they read the rest of his argument.

Organization

The **organization** of an argument—how a writer arranges ideas—is also important. For example, after stating his thesis, King tells readers why he is in Birmingham and what he hopes to accomplish: he wants unjust laws to be abolished and the 1954 Supreme Court ruling to be enforced. King then **refutes**—disproves or calls into question—the specific charges that were leveled at him by the white clergymen who want him to stop his protests.

The structure of “Letter from Birmingham Jail” enables King to make his points clearly, logically, and convincingly:

- King begins his argument by addressing the charge that his actions are untimely. If anything, says King, his actions are not timely enough: after all, African Americans have waited more than 340 years for their “constitutional and God-given rights” (14).
- He then addresses the issue of his willingness to break laws and makes the distinction between just and unjust laws.
- After chiding white moderates for not supporting his cause, he addresses their claim that he is extreme. According to King, this charge is false: if he had not embraced a philosophy of nonviolent protest, the streets of the South would “be flowing with blood” (29).
- King then makes the point that the contemporary church must re-capture the “sacrificial

spirit of the early church” (42). He does this by linking his struggle for freedom with the “sacred heritage of our nation and the eternal will of God” (44).

- King ends his argument by asserting both his humility and his unity with the white clergy.

Evidence

To convince an audience, a writer must support the thesis with **evidence** —facts, observations, expert opinion, and so on. King presents a great deal of evidence to support his arguments. For instance, he uses numerous examples (both historical and personal) as well as many references to philosophers, political thinkers, and theologians (such as Jesus, St. Paul, St. Augustine, Amos, Martin Luther, and Abraham Lincoln). According to King, these figures, who were once considered “extremists,” were not afraid of “making waves” when the need arose. Now, however, they are well within the mainstream of social, political, and religious thought. King also presents reasons, facts, and quotations to support his points.

Stylistic Techniques

Writers also use stylistic techniques to make their arguments more memorable and more convincing. For example, in “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” King uses figurative devices such as *similes*, *metaphors*, and *allusions* to enhance his argument.

Simile

A **simile** is a figure of speech that compares two unlike things using the word *like* or *as*.

Like a boil that can never be cured so long as it is covered up but must be opened with all its ugliness to the natural medicines of air and light, injustice must be exposed, ... before it can be cured. (24)

Isn't this **like** condemning a robbed man because his possession of money precipitated the evil act of robbery? (25)

Metaphor

A **metaphor** is a comparison in which two dissimilar things are compared without the word *like* or *as*. A metaphor suggests that two things that are very different share a quality.

Frankly, I have yet to engage in a direct-action campaign that was “well timed” in the view of those who have not suffered unduly from **the disease of segregation**. (13)

[W]hen you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in **an airtight cage of poverty** ... (14)

Allusion

An **allusion** is a reference within a work to a person, literary or biblical text, or historical event in order to enlarge the context of the situation being written about. The writer expects readers to

recognize the allusion and to make the connection to the text they are reading.

I would agree with St. Augustine that “an unjust law is no law at all.” (15)

Of course, there is nothing new about this kind of civil disobedience. It was evidenced sublimely in the refusal of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to obey the laws of Nebuchadnezzar, on the ground that a higher moral law was at stake. (21) [King expects his audience of clergymen to recognize this reference to the Book of Daniel in the Old Testament.]

In addition to those figurative devices, King uses stylistic techniques such as *parallelism*, *repetition*, and *rhetorical questions* to further his argument.

Parallelism

parallelism, the use of similar grammatical structures to emphasize related ideas, makes a passage easier to follow.

In any nonviolent campaign there are four basic steps: collection of the facts to determine whether injustices exist; negotiation; self-purification; and direct action. (6)

Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection. (23)

I wish you had commended the Negro sit-inners and demonstrators of Birmingham for their sublime courage, their willingness to suffer, and their amazing discipline in the midst of great provocation. (47)

Repetition

Intentional **repetition** involves repeating a word or phrase for emphasis, clarity, or emotional impact.

“Are you able to accept blows without retaliating?” “Are you able to endure the ordeal of jail?” (8)

If I have said anything in this letter that overstates the truth and indicates an unreasonable impatience, I beg you to forgive me. If I have said anything that understates the truth and indicates my having patience that allows me to settle for anything less than brotherhood, I beg God to forgive me. (49)

Rhetorical questions

A **rhetorical question** is a question that is asked to encourage readers to reflect on an issue, not to elicit a reply.

One may well ask: “How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?”
(15)

Will we be extremists for hate or for love? (31)

Assessing the Argument

No rhetorical analysis of an argument would be complete without an assessment of its effectiveness—whether the rhetorical strategies the writer uses create a clear and persuasive argument or whether they fall short. When you write a rhetorical analysis, you can begin with an assessment of the argument as a whole and go on to support it, or you can begin with a discussion of the various rhetorical strategies that the writer uses and then end with your assessment of the argument.

After analyzing “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” you could reasonably conclude that King has written a highly effective argument that is likely to convince his readers that his presence in Birmingham is both justified and necessary. Using *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos*, he constructs a multifaceted argument that is calculated to appeal to the various segments of his audience—Southern clergymen, white moderates, and African Americans. In addition, King uses similes, metaphors, and allusions to enrich his argument and to make it more memorable, and he uses parallelism, repetition, and rhetorical questions to emphasize ideas and to reinforce his points. Because it is so clear and powerful, King’s argument—in particular, the distinction between just and unjust laws—addresses not only the injustices that were present in 1963 when it was written but also the injustices and inequalities that exist today. In this sense, King has written an argument that has broad significance beyond the audiences for which it was originally intended.

CHECKLIST

Preparing to Write a Rhetorical Analysis

As you read, ask the following questions:

- Who is the writer? Is there anything in the writer’s background that might influence what is (or is not) included in the argument?
- What is the writer’s purpose? What does the writer hope to achieve?
- What question has the writer decided to address? How broad is the question?
- What situation created the need for the argument?
- At what points in the argument does the writer appeal to logic? To the emotions? How does the writer try to establish his or her credibility?
- What is the argument’s thesis? Where is it stated? Why?

- How does the writer organize the argument? How effective is this arrangement of ideas?
- What evidence does the writer use to support the argument? Does the writer use enough evidence?
- Does the writer use similes, metaphors, and allusions?
- Does the writer use parallelism, repetition, and rhetorical questions?
- Given your analysis, what is your overall assessment of the argument?

Sample Rhetorical Analysis

In preparation for a research paper, Deniz Bilgutay, a student in a writing class, read the following essay, “Terror’s Purse Strings” by Dana Thomas, which makes an argument against buying counterfeit designer goods. Deniz then wrote the rhetorical analysis that appears on [pages 115–117](#). (Deniz Bilgutay’s research paper, “The High Cost of Cheap Counterfeit Goods,” uses “Terror’s Purse Strings” as a source. See [Appendix B](#).)

This essay appeared in the *New York Times* on August 30, 2007.

DANA THOMAS

TERROR’S PURSE STRINGS

Luxury fashion designers are busily putting final touches on the handbags they will present during the spring-summer 2008 women’s wear shows, which begin next week in New York City’s Bryant Park. To understand the importance of the handbag in fashion today consider this: According to consumer surveys conducted by Coach, the average American woman was buying two new handbags a year in 2000; by 2004, it was more than four. And the average luxury bag retails for 10 to 12 times its production cost. 1

“There is a kind of an obsession with bags,” the designer Miuccia Prada told me. “It’s so easy to make money.” 2

Counterfeiters agree. As soon as a handbag hits big, counterfeiters around the globe churn out fake versions by the thousands. And they have no trouble selling them. Shoppers descend on Canal Street in New York, Santee Alley in Los Angeles, and flea markets and purse parties around the country to pick up knockoffs for one-tenth the legitimate bag’s retail cost, then pass them off as real. 3

“Judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys shop here,” a private investigator told me as we toured the counterfeit section of Santee Alley. “Affluent people from Newport Beach.” According to a study by the British law firm Davenport Lyons, two-thirds of British consumers are “proud to tell their family and friends” that they bought fake luxury fashion items. 4

At least 11 percent of the world’s clothing is fake, according to 2000 figures from the Global Anti-Counterfeiting Group in Paris. Fashion is easy to copy: counterfeiters buy the real items, take them apart, scan the pieces to make patterns, and produce almost-perfect fakes. 5

An international criminal police organization

Most people think that buying an imitation handbag or wallet is harmless, a victimless crime. But the counterfeiting rackets are run by crime syndicates that also deal in narcotics, weapons, child prostitution, human trafficking, and terrorism. Ronald K. Noble, the secretary general of Interpol,^o told the House of Representatives Committee on International Relations that profits from the sale of counterfeit goods have gone to groups associated with Hezbollah, the Shiite terrorist group, paramilitary organizations in Northern Ireland, and FARC, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. 6

“At least 11 percent of the world’s clothing is fake ...”

Sales of counterfeit T-shirts may have helped finance the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, according to the International AntiCounterfeiting Coalition. “Profits from counterfeiting are one of the three main sources of income supporting international terrorism,” said Magnus Ranstorp, a terrorism expert at the University of St. Andrews, in Scotland. 7

Most fakes today are produced in China, a good many of them by children. Children are sometimes sold or sent off by their families to work in clandestine factories that produce counterfeit luxury goods. Many in the West consider this an urban myth. But I have seen it myself. 8

On a warm winter afternoon in Guangzhou, I accompanied Chinese police officers on a factory raid in a decrepit tenement. Inside, we found two dozen children, ages 8 to 13, gluing and sewing together fake luxury-brand handbags. The police confiscated everything, arrested the owner, and sent the children out. Some punched their timecards, hoping to still get paid. (The average Chinese factory worker earns about \$120 a month; the counterfeit factory worker earns half that or less.) As we made our way back to the police vans, the children threw bottles and cans at us. They were now jobless and, because the factory owner housed them, homeless. It was *Oliver Twist* in the 21st century. 9

What can we do to stop this? Much like the war on drugs, the effort to protect luxury brands must go after the source: the counterfeit manufacturers. The company that took me on the Chinese raid is one of the only luxury-goods makers that works directly with Chinese authorities to shut down factories, and it has one of the lowest rates of counterfeiting. 10

Luxury brands also need to teach consumers that the traffic in fake goods has many victims. But most companies refuse to speak publicly about counterfeiting—some won’t even authenticate questionable items for concerned customers—believing, like Victorians,^o that acknowledging despicable actions tarnishes their sterling reputations. 11

The people who lived during the reign of Victoria (1819–1901), queen of Great Britain and Ireland, who are often associated with prudish behavior

So it comes down to us. If we stop knowingly buying fakes, the supply chain will dry up and counterfeiters will go out of business. The crime syndicates will have far less money to finance their illicit activities and their terrorist plots. And the children? They can go home. 12

A POWERFUL CALL TO ACTION

Context

Topic

Analysis of writer's purpose

Thesis statement: Assessment of essay

In her *New York Times* essay, “Terror’s Purse Strings,” writer Dana Thomas uses the opening of New York’s fashion shows as an opportunity to expose a darker side of fashion—the impact of imitation designer goods. Thomas explains to her readers why buying counterfeit luxury items, like fake handbags, is a serious problem. Her first goal is to raise awareness of the dangerous ties between counterfeiters who sell fake luxury merchandise and international criminal organizations that support terrorism and child labor. Her second goal is to explain how people can be a part of the solution by refusing to buy the counterfeit goods that finance these criminal activities. By establishing her credibility, building her case slowly, and appealing to both logic and emotions, Thomas succeeds in writing an interesting and informative argument. 1

Analysis of writer's audience

Writer's use of similes, metaphors, allusions

Writer's use of *ethos*

Analysis of the writer

For Thomas’s argument to work, she has to earn her readers’ trust. She does so first by anticipating a sympathetic, well-intentioned, educated audience and then by establishing her own credibility. To avoid sounding accusatory, Thomas assumes that her readers are unaware of the problem posed by counterfeit goods. She demonstrates this by presenting basic factual information and by acknowledging what “most people think” or what “many in the West consider”: that buying counterfeit goods is harmless. She also acknowledges her readers’ high level of education by drawing comparisons with history and literature—specifically, the Victorians and *Oliver Twist*. To further earn the audience’s trust, she uses her knowledge and position to gain credibility. As the Paris correspondent for *Newsweek* and as the author of a book on luxury goods, Thomas has credibility. Showing her familiarity with the world of fashion by referring to a conversation with renowned designer Miuccia Prada, she further establishes this credibility. Later in the article, she shares her experience of witnessing the abuse that accompanies the production of fake designer handbags. This anecdote allows her to say, “I’ve seen it myself,” confirming her knowledge not just of the fashion world but also of the world of counterfeiting. Despite her authority, she does not distance herself from readers. In fact, she goes out of her way to identify with them, using informal style and first person, noting “it comes down to us” and asking what “we” can do. 2

Analysis of essay's organization

Writer's use of *logos*

Writer's use of evidence

Writer's use of *pathos*

In Thomas's argument, both the organization and the use of evidence are effective. Thomas begins her article with statements that are easy to accept, and as she proceeds, she addresses more serious issues. In the first paragraph, she simply asks readers to "understand the importance of the handbag in fashion today." She demonstrates the wide-ranging influence and appeal of counterfeit designer goods, pointing out that "at least 11 percent of the world's clothing is fake." Thomas then makes the point that the act of purchasing these seemingly frivolous goods can actually have serious consequences. For example, crime syndicates and possibly even terrorist organizations actually run "the counterfeiting rackets" that produce these popular items. To support this point, she relies on two kinds of evidence—quotations from terrorism experts (specifically, the leader of a respected international police organization as well as a scholar in the field) and her own personal experience at a Chinese factory. Both kinds of evidence appeal to our emotions. Discussions of terrorism, especially those that recall the terrorist attacks on the United States, create fear. Descriptions of child labor in China encourage readers to feel sympathy. 3

Analysis of the essay's weakness

Thomas waits until the end of her argument to present her thesis because she assumes that her readers know little about the problem she is discussing. The one flaw in her argument is her failure to provide the evidence needed to establish connections between some causes and their effects. For example in paragraph 7, Thomas says that the sale of counterfeit T-shirts "may have helped finance the 1993 World Trade Center bombing." By using the word *may*, she qualifies her claim and weakens her argument. The same is true when Thomas says that profits from the sale of counterfeit goods "have gone to groups associated with Hezbollah, the Shiite terrorist group." Readers are left to wonder what specific groups are "associated with Hezbollah" and whether these groups are in fact terrorist organizations. Without this information, her assertion remains unsupported. In spite of these shortcomings, Thomas's argument is clear and well organized. More definite links between causes and effects, however, would have made it more convincing than it is. 4

➤ EXERCISE 4.1

Read the following essay, "Sweatshop Oppression," by Rajeev Ravisankar. Then, write a one-paragraph rhetorical analysis of the essay. Follow the template on [page 119](#), filling in the blanks to create your analysis.

This opinion essay was published in the *Lantern*, the student newspaper of the Ohio State

RAJEEV RAVISANKAR

SWEATSHOP OPPRESSION

Being the “poor” college students that we all are, many of us undoubtedly place an emphasis on finding the lowest prices. Some take this to the extreme and camp out in front of a massive retail store in the wee hours of the morning on Black Friday,^o waiting for the opportunity to buy as much as we can for as little as possible. 1

The Friday after Thanksgiving, traditionally the biggest shopping day of the year

What often gets lost in this rampant, low-cost driven consumerism is the high human cost it takes to achieve lower and lower prices. Specifically, this means the extensive use of sweatshop labor. 2

A work environment with long hours, low wages, and difficult or dangerous conditions

Many of us are familiar with the term sweatshop,^o but have difficulty really understanding how abhorrent the hours, wages, and conditions are. Many of these workers are forced to work 70–80 hours per week making pennies per hour. Workers are discouraged or intimidated from forming unions. 3

They must fulfill certain quotas for the day and stay extra hours (with no pay) if these are not fulfilled. Some are forced to sit in front of a machine for hours as they are not permitted to take breaks unless the manager allows them to do so. Unsanitary bathrooms, poor ventilation, and extreme heat, upward of 90 degrees, are also prevalent. Child labor is utilized in some factories as well. 4

Facing mounting pressure from labor rights activists, trade unions, student protests, and human-rights groups, companies claimed that they would make improvements. Many of the aforementioned conditions, however, persist. In many cases, even a few pennies more could make a substantial difference in the lives of these workers. Of course, multinational corporations are not interested in giving charity; they are interested in doing anything to increase profits. Also, many consumers in the West refuse to pay a little bit more even if it would improve the lives of sweatshop workers. 5

“[Corporations] are interested in doing anything to increase profits.”

Free-market economic fundamentalists have argued that claims made by those who oppose sweatshops actually have a negative impact on the plight of the poor in the developing world.

They suggest that by criticizing labor and human-rights conditions, anti-sweatshop activists have forced companies to pull out of some locations, resulting in workers losing their jobs. To shift the blame in this manner is to neglect a simple fact: Companies, not the anti-sweatshop protestors, make the decision to shift to locations where they can find cheaper labor and weaker labor restrictions. 6

Simply put, the onus should always be on companies such as Nike, Reebok, Adidas, Champion, Gap, Wal-Mart, etc. They are to blame for perpetuating a system of exploitation which seeks to get as much out of each worker for the least possible price. 7

By continuing to strive for lower wages and lower input costs, they are taking part in a phenomenon which has been described as “the race to the bottom.” The continual decline of wages and working conditions will be accompanied by a lower standard of living. This hardly seems like the best way to bring the developing world out of the pits of poverty. 8

So what can we do about it? Currently, the total disregard for human well-being through sweatshop oppression is being addressed by a number of organizations, including University Students against Sweatshops. USAS seeks to make universities source their apparel in factories that respect workers’ rights, especially the right to freely form unions. 9

According to an article in *The Nation*, universities purchase nearly “\$3 billion in T-shirts, sweatshirts, caps, sneakers and sports uniforms adorned with their institutions’ names and logos.” Because brands do not want to risk losing this money, it puts pressure on them to provide living wages and reasonable conditions for workers. Campaigns such as this are necessary if we are to stop the long race to the bottom. 10

TEMPLATE FOR WRITING A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

Ravisankar begins his essay by

The problem he identifies is

Ravisankar assumes his readers are

_____. His purpose in this essay is to

In order to accomplish this purpose, he appeals mainly to

He also appeals to

In his essay, Ravisankar addresses the main argument against his thesis, the idea that

He refutes this argument by saying

Finally, he concludes by making the point

that _____

Overall, the argument Ravisankar makes is effective [or ineffective] because _____

➤ EXERCISE 4.2

Read the following essay, “Where Sweatshops Are a Dream,” by Nicholas D. Kristof. Then, write a rhetorical analysis of Kristof’s essay. Be sure to consider the rhetorical situation, the means of persuasion, and the writer’s rhetorical strategies. End your rhetorical analysis with an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of Kristof’s argument.

This opinion column was published in the *New York Times* on January 15, 2009.

NICHOLAS D. KRISTOF

WHERE SWEATSHOPS ARE A DREAM

Before Barack Obama and his team act on their talk about “labor standards,” I’d like to offer them a tour of the vast garbage dump here in Phnom Penh. 1

This is a Dante-like vision of hell. It’s a mountain of festering refuse, a half-hour hike across, emitting clouds of smoke from subterranean fires. 2

The miasma of toxic stink leaves you gasping, breezes batter you with filth, and even the rats look forlorn. Then the smoke parts and you come across a child ambling barefoot, searching for old plastic cups that recyclers will buy for five cents a pound. Many families actually live in shacks on this smoking garbage. 3

Mr. Obama and the Democrats who favor labor standards in trade agreements mean well, for they intend to fight back at oppressive sweatshops abroad. But while it shocks Americans to hear it, the central challenge in the poorest countries is not that sweatshops exploit too many people, but that they don’t exploit enough. 4

Talk to these families in the dump, and a job in a sweatshop is a cherished dream, an escalator out of poverty, the kind of gauzy if probably unrealistic ambition that parents everywhere often have for their children. 5

“I’d love to get a job in a factory,” said Pim Srey Rath, a 19-year-old woman scavenging for plastic. “At least that work is in the shade. Here is where it’s hot.” 6

Another woman, Vath Sam Oeun, hopes her 10-year-old boy, scavenging beside her, grows up to get a factory job, partly because she has seen other children run over by garbage trucks. Her boy has never been to a doctor or a dentist and last bathed when he was 2, so a sweatshop job by comparison would be far more pleasant and less dangerous. 7

I’m glad that many Americans are repulsed by the idea of importing products made by barely paid, barely legal workers in dangerous factories. Yet sweatshops are only a symptom of poverty, not a cause, and banning them closes off one route out of poverty. At a time of

tremendous economic distress and protectionist pressures, there's a special danger that tighter labor standards will be used as an excuse to curb trade. 8

“[S]weatshops are only a symptom of poverty, not a cause.”

When I defend sweatshops, people always ask me: But would you want to work in a sweatshop? No, of course not. But I would want even less to pull a rickshaw. In the hierarchy of jobs in poor countries, sweltering at a sewing machine isn't the bottom. 9

My views on sweatshops are shaped by years living in East Asia, watching as living standards soared—including those in my wife's ancestral village in southern China—because of sweatshop jobs. 10

Manufacturing is one sector that can provide millions of jobs. Yet sweatshops usually go not to the poorest nations but to better-off countries with more reliable electricity and ports. 11

I often hear the argument: Labor standards can improve wages and working conditions, without greatly affecting the eventual retail cost of goods. That's true. But labor standards and “living wages” have a larger impact on production costs that companies are always trying to pare. The result is to push companies to operate more capital-intensive factories in better-off nations like Malaysia, rather than labor-intensive factories in poorer countries like Ghana or Cambodia. 12

Cambodia has, in fact, pursued an interesting experiment by working with factories to establish decent labor standards and wages. It's a worthwhile idea, but one result of paying above-market wages is that those in charge of hiring often demand bribes—sometimes a month's salary—in exchange for a job. In addition, these standards add to production costs, so some factories have closed because of the global economic crisis and the difficulty of competing internationally. 13

The best way to help people in the poorest countries isn't to campaign against sweatshops but to promote manufacturing there. One of the best things America could do for Africa would be to strengthen our program to encourage African imports, called AGOA, and nudge Europe to match it. 14

Among people who work in development, many strongly believe (but few dare say very loudly) that one of the best hopes for the poorest countries would be to build their manufacturing industries. But global campaigns against sweatshops make that less likely. 15

Look, I know that Americans have a hard time accepting that sweatshops can help people. But take it from 13-year-old Neuo Chanthou, who earns a bit less than \$1 a day scavenging in the dump. She's wearing a “Playboy” shirt and hat that she found amid the filth, and she worries about her sister, who lost part of her hand when a garbage truck ran over her. 16

“It's dirty, hot, and smelly here,” she said wistfully. “A factory is better.” 17

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NORMAN ROCKWELL



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