Joining the Conversation
Writing in College and Beyond

MIKE PALMQVIST
“The major strength of Joining the Conversation is that it clearly articulates the meaning of and possibilities for reading, writing, and doing research in the digital age.”

— Katherine Heenan, Arizona State University

“Mike Palmquist’s focus on the importance of research writing and using technology, his attention to genre and visual rhetoric — as well as his use of student examples and student-focused writing projects — fit with many compositionists’ vision of the future of first-year writing courses.”

— Randall McClure, Florida Gulf Coast University

“Clear, direct, and complete…. The tone and reading level are quite effective. Mike Palmquist takes writing — and student writers — seriously.”

— Carole Clark Papper, Hofstra University
Dear Instructor

Bedford/St. Martin’s is pleased to announce the publication of a new rhetoric by Mike Palmquist, Joining the Conversation, in January 2010. With the success of The Bedford Researcher, Mike Palmquist has earned a devoted following of teachers and students who appreciate his accessible approach to the process of inquiry-based writing. Now he brings his proven methodology and friendly tone to Joining the Conversation.

The book has five parts that cover the entire writing and research process, but Part Two: Contributing to a Conversation comprises the purpose- and genre-based assignment chapters that are at the heart of this text. In this preview booklet, you’ll find Chapter 7: Writing to Analyze.

Each assignment chapter in Joining the Conversation is supported by the kind of help for writing you expect from Mike Palmquist and Bedford/St. Martin’s:

- **Detailed, process-centered support** offers specific, accessible strategies for finding a conversation to join, gathering information, and preparing a draft.
- **Extended examples from real student writers** suggest ways to approach sticky points in the composing process, such as coming up with a topic, outlining, and peer review.
- **Genres in Conversation**, the opening spread of each assignment chapter, juxtaposes three documents on the same topic and encourages students to analyze how genre influences design.
- **An array of readings** — a mix of public and academic, traditional and multimedia — illustrates the variety of genre, tone, and style within each writing purpose.

In addition, the assignment chapters each establish a distinct **writer’s role**. For example, here in Chapter 7, writers adopt the role of Interpreter, who analyzes or explains ideas or events. By imagining a specific role, students understand how a writer’s purpose influences decisions about choice of genre, the shape and the design of the document, and the use of sources.

For a complete table of contents and more detailed information about features and ancillaries, or to request an examination copy, visit [bedfordstmartins.com/conversation/catalog](http://bedfordstmartins.com/conversation/catalog).

We hope that you will be as excited as we are about Joining the Conversation. In fact, we’re so confident that you and your students will benefit from this new approach that we’d like to offer you the opportunity to review materials or class test them with your students. If you are interested, contact Karita dos Santos, Market Development Manager for English, at kdossantos@bedfordstmartins.com. We look forward to hearing from you!

Best wishes,
The Bedford/St. Martin’s Composition Team
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22 Using APA Style
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When I analyze a topic, I take on the role of interpreter.
The emergence of digital music and file sharing has forced the recording industry to rethink the way it does business. Imagine that you are a consultant hired to help a media company understand recent trends. In the process of researching the current and projected size of the digital music market and the complications of entering it, you find a Web article, a professional report, and a scholarly journal article. Each document focuses on the state of the digital music market but uses a distinct genre to do so.

**The State of Digital Music in 2006**

March 29th, 2006 | by Chris Nickson

Digital Music Demand is Greater than Ever

With the start of 2006, digital music has started its growth from infancy into adolescence. In the week between Christmas 2005 and New Year’s, 20 million tracks were downloaded in America and another million in Britain. These are some seriously healthy numbers. Not only do they reflect the huge amount of iPods and other portable devices sold, but also the spread of broadband connections, and the fact that people are now comfortable consuming their music digitally, on a track-by-track rather than album-by-album basis. Long predicted, the listening habits of the general population are beginning to shift.

It’s seismic, but it’s still small—digital music accounted for only six percent of total music sales in 2005. Yet even that is a massive increase over the year before, a whopping 194 percent, which is fisically valuable as the sales of CDs continue to decrease (although even with digital sales, the record labels experienced another downturn in 2005). While the young, usually the first to adopt and adapt to new technology, have been downloading and swapping music for quite some time, there’s been a ripple effect into the older, wanner area of the population, one that will only increase. Thank—or blame—Apple and its iPod, or any of the many other makes selling like hotcakes in the stores.

As a real indicator that digital demand has moved beyond the young, music giant Universal recently announced plans to digitize 100,000 tracks from its vaults over the next four years. That’s a big move, but it’s more important for its implications. They’re not talking about music for teenagers, so they obviously believe there’s a burgeoning market among baby boomers, now quite happy and very willing to part with money to download obscure songs from their youth.

But if digital music is now a teenager, it’s one with a number of issues, and one of the biggest and trickiest is digital rights management (DRM). In essence, it’s a limit on what you can do with the tracks you buy and download. In some cases, you can share the track between a limited number of computers and portable devices.
Section 3: The Explosion of Channels, Formats and Business Models

Five years ago music distribution formats were numbered in single figures – today, they number in the hundreds

In the digital era, recent companies are licensing music across a multitude of platforms, in scores of different formats and with hundreds of different partners. New revenue streams are evolving as labels work with social networks, direct-to-consumer sites and brand partnerships

A-la-carte download services
A-la-carte downloads result in the dominant digital business model, with music held in the online sector. In the US, iTunes surpassed Amazon and Target in 2007 to become the third largest music retailer (NPD MusicWorld).

Other big brand names also came into the download market in 2007, notably Amazon, with its online music download store in partnership with all majors and many independent labels, and the announcement of Haiti's new "Comes With Music" service.

"I like the fact that you pay a set fee for all the music you want with Napster, but I can't use it with my iPod."  
20 year old UK student, IFPI focus group research, July 2007

Omifone launched MusicStation, a new mobile subscription service designed to work on a wide range of music devices worldwide. It is already being used in the UK, Hong Kong, Sweden and South Africa and there are plans to roll it out in many more countries in 2008.

MusicStation offers users access to a library of over 1.5 million tracks from all major records and independent labels for a small weekly fee, with no extra download charges. It backs up a successful library so that a consumer's library is protected and transferred to any music collection. In the UK, the service comes bundled in a range of exciting price plans or is available on a Pay As You Go basis at £1.99 per week.

Omifone Global mobile phone applications


Music Information Retrieval (MIR) is a multidisciplinary research endeavor that strives to develop automatic music-related searching schemes, retrieval interfaces, and evolving networked delivery mechanisms in an effort to make the world's vast stores of music accessible to all. Some teams are developing "query-by-singing" and "query-by-humming" systems that allow users to interact with their respective music search engines via queries that are sung or hummed into a microphone, e.g., Birmingham et al. 2001, Haas and Polian 2001. "query-by-example" systems are also being developed wherein searchers construct queries consisting of pitch and/or rhythm representations, e.g., Pickens 2003, Dayanury and Rigger 2003. Input methods for query-by-note systems include symbolic interfaces as well as both physical (MIDI) and virtual (Java-based) keyboards. Some teams are working on "query-by-example" systems that take pre-recorded music in the form of CD or MP3 tracks as their query input, e.g., Hammon and Keller 2002, Harb and Chun 2003. The development of comprehensive music recomposition and distribution prototypes is a growing research area, e.g., Logan 2003, Pasos and Eggum 2003. The automatic generation of playlists for use in home or personal music systems, based on a wide variety of user-defined criteria, is the goal of this branch of MIR research. Other groups are investigating the creation of music analysis systems to assist those in the taxonomy and music theory communities, e.g., Barthelmie and Bonami 2000, Kermatzi 2000. Outlines of MIR's interdisciplinary research areas can be found in Downs (2004), Byrd and Caverly (2002), and Frey and Duarte (2003).

This article begins with an overview of the current scientific problem facing MIR research. Entitled "Current Scientific Problem," the opening section also provides a brief explanation of the Test Retrieval Conference (TREC) evaluation paradigm that has come to play an important role in the researchers' thinking about the testing and evaluation of MIR systems. The sections which follow, entitled "Data Collection Methods" and "Evaluative Thematics and Commentary," report upon the findings of the Music Information Retrieval (MIR) TREC-like evaluation paradigm for MIR as the central focus.

"Building a TREC-like Test Collection" follows next and highlights the progress being made concerning the establishment of the necessary test collections. The "Summary and Future Research" section concludes this article and highlights some of the key challenges uncovered that require further investigation.

Current Scientific Problem
Notwithstanding the promising technological advances being made by the various research teams, MIR research has been plagued by one overwhelming difficulty: there has been no way for researchers to scientifically compare and contrast their various approaches. This is because there has existed no standard collection of music against which each team could test its algorithms, no standardized sets of performance tasks, and no standardized evaluation metrics. The MIR community has long recognized the need for a more rigorous and comprehensive evaluation paradigm. A formalized resolution expressing this need was passed on 14 October 2001 by the attendees of the Second International Symposium on Music Information Retrieval (ISMIR 2001).

"Computer Music Journal" is a scholarly journal for university and industry researchers who present a highly technical study of technologies for locating and downloading digital music.
What Is Writing to Analyze?

Analytical writing begins with a question: To what extent does government surveillance of suspected terrorists impinge on civil liberties? How will new environmental laws affect a proposed housing development near a state park? Why do animated films from Pixar Studios appeal to so many adults? The types of documents—or genres (see p. 208)—writers create to share their answers are as varied as the questions they ask. And each document, in turn, reflects aspects of the writing situations in which writers find themselves: their purposes for analyzing a subject, the interests and expectations of their intended readers, the sources used to support the analysis, and the context in which the document will be read.

Analysis involves adopting the role of interpreter. Writers who adopt this role help readers understand the origins, qualities, significance, or potential impact of a subject. An interpreter might address the causes of a recent economic downturn, for example, while another might explore the cultural implications of a new album by Kanye West. Another writer might present a historical analysis of U.S. involvement in foreign wars, while yet another might try to help college students understand the impact of proposed legislation on the cost of attending college.

In many cases, interpreters are already knowledgeable about their subjects. More often, however, they spend time learning about a subject to ensure that they can offer a well-grounded interpretation. Whether they draw on the subject itself, interview experts, collect information from published sources, or use statistical evidence, effective interpreters provide even knowledgeable readers with enough information about a subject to explain the focus of their analyses and to ensure that their interpretations will make sense in the context in which they’re read.

Readers of analytical documents usually share the writer’s interest in the subject and want to understand...
it in greater depth, either because it affects them in some way or because they are curious about it. They expect a clear introduction to the subject, focused interpretation, thorough explanations of how the writer arrived at his or her conclusions, and reasonable support for those conclusions. Readers also tend to expect that an analytical document will use an interpretive framework that is appropriate to the subject and similar to those typically used by other writers in the field. For example, readers with a literary background would be surprised if an analysis of a major novel was based on the book’s sales history, rather than on some form of textual interpretation. Similarly, readers with a background in political science might find an article that focused on the aesthetic qualities of a speech by a presidential candidate less interesting than one that analyzed the political implications of the candidate’s arguments.

Interpreters’ choices about interpretive framework, sources, and perspective can and do lead to different—sometimes extremely different—conclusions about a subject. As a result, analytical documents not only serve as significant contributions to a conversation but also provide a foundation for further contributions to the conversation.

What Kinds of Documents Are Used to Present an Analysis?

Writers share their interpretations of subjects through a strikingly large array of genres. Soldiers and aid workers in Iraq and Afghanistan, for example, have interpreted the events in which they are involved through books, blogs, and social-networking sites. Commentators analyze the political landscape through columns, editorials, and data analyses. Scholars examine subjects as diverse as Shakespeare’s sonnets, the possibility of life on Mars, and the potential for electoral college reform through journal articles and conference presentations. And students are frequently asked to share their interpretations through Web-based articles, news analyses, multimedia presentations, literary criticism, and analytical essays.

Regardless of the genre a writer decides to use, most analytical writing begins with an attempt to understand how other writers have approached the challenges of analyzing a particular subject. Examining analytical documents can spark ideas about how to focus an analysis, offer insights into the kinds of interpretive frameworks that have been used to direct past analyses, and provide an understanding of the conclusions other writers have drawn.
Web-Based Articles

Most major magazines, such as Newsweek, Atlantic Monthly, and Runner’s World, offer online versions of their publications, providing electronic copies of print articles along with material written specifically for the Web edition. Many newer magazines, however, publish exclusively on the Web. Some of these online publications, such as Slate and Salon, appeal to a general audience. Others, such as Pedal Pushers Online (pedalpushersonline.com) or Vegetarian Women Online Magazine (vegetarianwomen.com), cater to readers with specific interests. In either case, Web-based magazines typically offer a mix of traditional articles and essays, blogs, video entries, news feeds, and reader-response forums.

Analytical Web-based articles often begin with a question, or a problematic fact or puzzling situation that leads to a question. Writers of such articles must be knowledgeable and need to understand the history and significance of their subjects. Depending on the specific publication and writing situation, they might rely on statistical evidence, personal experience, or direct observation. In many cases, they must clearly explain unfamiliar background material to more general readers or interpret complex data.

Articles in online magazines can draw on a range of sources, ranging from interviews, surveys, published studies, and scholarly works to popular culture and personal observation. Writers of online articles often embed links to their sources within the text of their documents instead of listing them at the end, allowing readers to jump directly to cited works as they read. Commenting functions encourage readers to respond to writers in a public forum, creating an ongoing written conversation that anybody can join. In these and other ways, analytical discussions usually move forward more quickly and more unpredicatably online than they do in print journals.

Rahul K. Parikh

Race and the White Coat

This Web-based article first appeared in Salon, a widely read online magazine sponsored by Salon Media Group. As you read it, notice how the author provides instant access to the scientific studies he used to develop his analysis of doctors’ subconscious racial biases and their effects on medical care for minority patients. Rahul K. Parikh is a pediatrician and a regular contributor to Salon. A frequent host of the National Public Radio program Perspectives, he has also published articles in the San Francisco Chronicle and the New York Times.
Race and the White Coat

Racial bias in doctors and health care workers is doing great harm. Is enough being done to stop it?

By Rahul K. Parikh, M.D.

Apr. 22, 2008 | Here’s something the medical community has known for a long time: Minorities in this country, particularly African Americans, are not as healthy as whites. They suffer from high rates of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, HIV, cancer, asthma, and other chronic illnesses.

There are many reasons for the disparities. Blacks have less access to health care. Many lack health insurance altogether. A study in the New England Journal of Medicine showed that black communities have fewer primary care doctors, and that those doctors reported a harder time getting their patients quality services due to insurance restrictions.

When minorities get sick, they’re likely to show up in an emergency room because they don’t have anywhere else to go. When they get there, they’re usually sicker because of the delay in seeking care. As the New England Journal study showed, minorities are more likely to get a doctor who isn’t board certified and is of lower quality.

In 2002, the Institute of Medicine issued a sobering report about health disparities in America. In that report, the IOM challenged assumptions by asking one very hard question: Do doctors treat minority patients differently? Its answer, after reviewing more than 100 studies, was yes, “evidence suggests that bias, prejudice, and stereotyping on the part of health care providers may contribute to differences in care.”

Most of these studies adjusted for differences in incomes, age, insurance status, and disease severity. In other words, the only factor that contributed to the disparity in treatment was the color of a patient’s skin. Studies show that African Americans in general harbor suspicion toward the medical community, a feeling that may lead some blacks to decline or refuse recommended treatments. But the IOM determined that this couldn’t account for the severity of black-white disparities.
Over the past decade, there’s been a growing body of evidence to support the IOM’s conclusion. A 2000 study demonstrated that doctors rated black patients as less intelligent, less educated, more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol, more likely to fail to comply with medical advice, more likely to lack social support, and less likely to participate in cardiac rehabilitation than whites, even after income, education, and personality characteristics were taken into account.

Researchers have also found that African Americans with chronic renal failure are less likely than whites to be offered information and a referral for a kidney transplant. They’ve learned that blacks are regularly undertreated for pain from fractures and cancer and are less likely to be prescribed appropriate medications for certain psychiatric problems.

Doctors are sworn by their oath and bound by law to treat patients equally. Most of us got into this business because we wanted to do right by people. Race, class, and gender aren’t supposed to influence us. But it would seem something is amiss when we treat black patients.

To figure out why, a group of Harvard Medical School researchers turned the spotlight on doctors. The researchers took a group of 287 doctors and administered a computerized test. Called the Implicit Association Test (IAT), it has been around for a decade and has been used over 5 million times as a tool to measure implicit biases, as opposed to outright prejudice. In this case, the test subjects were shown pictures of black or white patients. They were asked about the person’s attitude (“good” vs. “bad”), as well as their impressions of the person’s general cooperativeness and medical cooperativeness.

Along with the photos, they were given a scenario in which the patient exhibited symptoms and a test result suggesting they were having a heart attack. Doctors were asked whether they thought the patient was having a heart attack and whether they would treat him with a thrombolytic drug, a medicine meant to break up a blood clot in the coronary arteries, which is a standard treatment for heart attack victims. Finally, physicians were asked questions that measured whether they harbored any explicit biases toward blacks.

It turns out the doctors didn’t harbor any overt bias or prejudice. But the results of the IAT and the outcome of the heart attack scenario told us something quite different: More doctors subconsciously attributed negative traits to blacks (thinking them “uncooperative” or “bad”) than whites. Worse was the way these biases translated into clinical decisions. While doctors diagnosed more blacks with a heart attack, they ended up prescribing treatment for blacks and whites in essentially equal numbers, meaning that black patients having heart attacks were going untreated. Further, as the degree of bias toward blacks increased, so did their likelihood of not getting treated.

This study, published last summer in the Journal of General Internal Medicine, was the first hard evidence that doctors’ clinical decision making is influenced by race, and that those decisions stand to do harm.
Does this mean that doctors are racist? No. In fact, the discrepancy between explicit and implicit biases in the Harvard study suggests the opposite. But it’s clear deeper biases exist, and for several reasons.

First, and most important, doctors are people. There’s plenty of evidence that well-intentioned people, whatever their background, possess and demonstrate unconscious negative racial attitudes and stereotypes. Doctors are no different. We share many common conceptions about race in America. We bring those influences, right or wrong, with us to the office.

The second reason lies in the roots of the medical thought process. Every day, doctors and other health professionals make a lot of serious and complex decisions, usually without all the information we need to be certain about them. Many of these decisions are made under intense time pressure. To cope, we rely on intellectual and emotional shortcuts — ones that help to clarify things. We learn to think in terms of stereotypes; for example, in pediatrics, a child with a fever and an earache is likely to have an ear infection. It’s likely that an adult with chest pain radiating to the left arm is having heart attack. In our library of shortcuts, we include “data” on stereotypical patients as well — an overweight person is at risk for high cholesterol and diabetes; Asians are at higher risk for stomach cancer; African Americans are at higher risk for asthma. We know these things to be true based on studies of disease patterns.

The paradox here is that: race, age, gender. Are we putting those factors too far in front of other factors in how we treat or don’t treat our patients? Have culture and how we think led us to apply stereotypes detrimentally? This would seem to be the case.

The environment in which a doctor trains may also lead to biases. Many teaching hospitals are in tough urban areas where patients may be poorer, less educated minorities. Here’s how that might play out in a resident’s experience. Every day, he may see patient after patient who can’t or won’t take his advice on how to take care of asthma. Reasons for that may include anything from a lack of money, a lack of understanding, or suspicion about medicine. Seeing those patients get sicker and sicker, and show up again and again in the emergency room, is bound to be frustrating. So after the 100th patient, he may conclude “these types of people just won’t take my advice.” He’s then a lot less likely to bother or care about offering that advice to the 101st patient.

All of this is another example of why race in America is so hard for this country to face. Whether we’re talking about your doctor, your congressperson, or your neighbor, racial bias is hard to beat because so many times it’s hard to even feel. In medicine, these biases clearly exist, they are clearly doing harm, and they need to stop.

It’s certainly a good thing that we in the medical profession have checked ourselves on this issue. Training in cross-cultural competence is under way, although many emphasize that the training needs to be conducted carefully to help physicians understand and respect diversity rather than simply reinforce cultural stereotypes. Diversifying the workforce — not just
In your writer’s notebook, record your reactions to Parikh’s analysis by responding to the following questions:

1. The first half of Parikh’s analysis is devoted to establishing the existence of a troubling trend. What, exactly, is the trend that concerns him? What evidence does he offer to prove that it’s a problem?

2. Parikh makes reference to both “implicit” and “explicit” bias (paras. 9–11). What is the difference between the two? Why does the distinction matter?

3. Parikh is a practicing physician; he is also of Indian descent. In what ways does he draw on his professional and personal background to establish his credibility to write on the subject of medical bias?
4. Toward the middle of his analysis, Parikh suggests that stereotypes are a necessary, and often positive, element of medical diagnosis (para. 15). What does he mean? Why must doctors rely on “shortcuts,” and what effect does this have on their treatment of minority patients?

5. In paragraph 18, Parikh writes, “All of this is another example of why race in America is so hard for this country to face. Whether we’re talking about your doctor, your congressperson, or your neighbor, racial bias is hard to beat because so many times it’s hard to even feel.” Why should it matter that many people don’t recognize their own biases? What implications does this observation suggest for racial issues beyond medical care?

News Analyses

A news analysis offers an interpretation of a recent event, such as a natural disaster, a change in government policy, or a business merger. For example, questions about the rapid rise in the price of fuel in recent years have been the subject of numerous news analyses. Other news analyses have focused on topics such as campaign finance reform, government efforts to deter terrorism, and proposed changes in immigration law.

News analyses are written for readers who seek a fuller understanding of the origins or implications of an event. Style and design tend to reflect the standards of the publication in which the news analysis appears—usually, but not always, a newspaper, a magazine, or a Web site. Most writers adopt a balanced tone, even when their analysis strongly reflects a particular set of values or beliefs, and they often include illustrations, such as photographs and charts, to persuade readers that their interpretations are reasonable and well founded. Writers of news analyses usually acknowledge their sources of information, although they don’t necessarily use a formal citation system.

Aida Akl

_U.S. Population Hits 300 Million_

The following news analysis, written by Aida Akl and published by the Voice of America (VOA) on its Web site, calls attention to a milestone in U.S. population growth and explores the implications of specific growth trends. Like writers of other news analyses, Akl presents enough information to provide a basis for analysis. Her focus, however, is on the question of how current growth trends will shape the United States. Aida Akl is a broadcaster and journalist who has worked for the Voice of America in the Middle East and in Washington, D.C., for more than two decades. She is currently a correspondent for the daily VOA news analysis program _Focus._
U.S. Population Hits 300 Million

By Aida Akl
Washington, D.C.
22 August 2006

America’s population is projected to hit 300 million in October, making it the world’s largest after China and India. But some analysts say America’s population growth, largely fueled by immigration, could change the face of the nation.

The population gain reported by the U.S. Census Bureau—up 20 million in the past six years—is the result of both natural growth and an influx of immigrants. An annual birth rate of about 1 percent accounts for 60 percent of the population increase, while the remaining 40 percent is due to immigration.

Demographer William Frey of the Brookings Institution here in Washington says the population increase is a milestone for America.

“Not only is it the large number that establishes us as one of the most populous countries in the world, but it [i.e., the population increase] also means that people who are coming here to help make this 300 million situation are people from other parts of the world—from Latin America, from Asia. We would not have reached this goal as fast as we have were it not for all of these immigrants coming to the United States,” says Frey.

About two-thirds of the nation’s population is white, down from 70 percent at the start of the decade. Demographer Frey and many other experts say the percentage of non-Hispanic whites will fall further as more immigrants arrive and America’s post–World War II Baby Boom generation continues to age.

A Major Demographic Shift

The average birth rate for the non-Hispanic white population is around two births per woman, compared to nearly three per woman among Hispanic whites. These trends, says demographer Mark Mather of the Washington-based Population Reference Bureau, will lead to major demographic shifts.

“I don’t know of any other countries that have experienced changes in their racial ethnic composition to the extent that we are. So lots of demographers think that by 2050, racial and ethnic categories won’t even be that meaningful anymore because we’re going to be such a melting pot society that these categories may not even appear on the census form anymore,” says Mather.

Many analysts are skeptical about the benefits of current population trends. They question whether the U.S. economy can produce enough jobs and argue that unchecked immigration will cause urban sprawl and strain natural resources. Others say far too many immigrants are entering the U.S. to be assimilated into mainstream society.

Demographer William Johnson of the Population Institute, an international educational group in Washington, says immigration strengthens America—if kept within manageable limits.

“America has evolved throughout its history, and migration has been a good thing
because of assimilation. We all come together to redefine ourselves every generation, and that’s been the strength of our country. However,” says Johnson, “if you don’t have assimilation, if you have a cultural separation, if people who are migrants still first ally themselves and identify themselves with their countries of origin, then the value of that decreases. To what extent it would be a good thing or a divisive thing in the future is difficult to predict.”

**Ethnic Minorities and the Cultural Gap**

Recent projections released by the Census Bureau show that ethnic minorities now account for one-third of America’s population and will make up 40 percent of the U.S. population in the next decade. Non-Hispanic whites are now a minority in Hawaii, New Mexico, Texas, California, and the District of Columbia.

Demographer Joseph D’Agostino of the Population Research Institute in Virginia says concerns over the nation’s changing demographic and cultural makeup are legitimate.

“A lot of people feel that immigrants are coming in too fast, or maybe they are not being assimilated fast enough. So many Americans have experienced large areas of cities where people cannot speak English,” says D’Agostino. “And if we can’t all communicate together with one language as Americans, it’s very difficult to see how we are going to have a cohesive society in the long term. That’s a major problem that can result in the ‘Balkanization’ of the United States over the long term.”

Based on current trends, D’Agostino says one of two scenarios is possible. “If by the year 2050 you have one-third of the population with Spanish as their first language, if you have people who have not assimilated the American ideals of rule of law and democracy, etc., America could face some really huge problems,” says D’Agostino. “If on the other hand we restrict immigration severely but the birth rate doesn’t go up, then we’ll have an even worse problem with [an] aging population and not enough workers. So we’ve got to figure out what the right balance is. One great step forward would be to eliminate multi-culturalism and then again put a great emphasis on the assimilation of immigrants.”

But many analysts say such concerns are unjustified. They argue that America has successfully assimilated immigrants in the past and can do so again.

**Planning for the Future**

A key element to success, says demographer William Frey of the Brookings Institution, is careful planning to ensure immigrants get the services they need and to prevent them from becoming a permanent underclass.

“One of the things we do have to worry about is maybe the social inequality that may occur. We want to make sure that when we do bring people into the United States, they have a fair chance to get a job and live a nice lifestyle here. We need to then make sure they get a good education. It’s a big challenge for us,” says Frey.

Today, the United States receives largely two types of immigrants: the well educated who typically end up in high-tech jobs, and those with minimal education, who largely work in low-wage, manual labor or service industries.

Demographic projections put the U.S. population at 400 million people by 2050. If current population trends continue, most analysts agree that America will be an ethnically different nation.

*This story was first broadcast on the English news program VOA News Now.*
In your writer’s notebook, respond to Akl’s news analysis by answering the following questions:

1. What is the main point of Akl’s news analysis? How would you summarize it in a sentence or two? What specific interpretive question(s) does Akl attempt to answer?

2. Throughout her article, Akl summarizes reports from the U.S. Census Bureau and presents the results of interviews with experts. Find specific instances where she cites authorities and published documents to support assertions, generalities, or predictions. What makes these sources reliable? What do they contribute to the effectiveness of Akl’s analysis?

3. The authorities Akl cites disagree with one another. Identify and briefly summarize at least two conflicting opinions about the long-term implications of current population trends. What does Akl accomplish by presenting these competing points of view? Does she seem to favor one position over the others, or is she trying to be impartial? Why do you think so?

4. How do the subheadings (in bold type) contribute to your understanding of the article? How might a writer use subheadings to direct a reader’s attention?

Multimedia Presentations

Multimedia presentations, sometimes referred to as PowerPoint presentations because they are frequently created using Microsoft PowerPoint, consist of a series of slides that typically contain text and illustrations. Most multimedia presentations are designed to accompany and enhance the words of a speaker. The slides provide a foundation on which the presenter builds with additional spoken comments or notes. Some slides might contain highly detailed information in the form of lists, tables, charts, graphs, images, animation, video, or audio.

Many presentations have two audiences: a primary audience who attends the presentation and a secondary audience who might read the presentation slides and notes online or in print. In general, creators of multimedia presentations consider the expectations of the sponsoring organization and the characteristics of the target audience (primary and secondary) as they draft and polish their analyses. When multimedia presentations are distributed as stand-alone documents, as is the case when they are
presented on a Web site or distributed via CD or DVD, summaries of the speaker’s words are sometimes provided through notes attached to each slide. In a growing number of cases, video recordings of presentations can be viewed in a Web browser as well.

Joanne Fiskern

*Is Snowboarding Losing Its Edge?*

How have attitudes toward snowboarders changed since the sport was first introduced? In this multimedia presentation, Joanne Fiskern attempts to answer this question as she offers an analysis of the causes underlying a shift in public perception. Once seen as reckless and impolite, snowboarders are now viewed as similar to skiers in their values and behavior. The slides that follow are only part of the overall presentation. Although they provide important information, they serve primarily as a backdrop for the more detailed analysis presented during the speaker’s spoken observations about the subject.
A Brief History of Boarding

1965  Originates with the Snurfer, a snow toy for children
1985  39 of 600 ski areas allow boarding.
1998  Snowboarding competition at the Olympics. Giant slalom gold medalist tests positive for marijuana.
2006  Only 4 ski areas in the U.S. ban boarding.

Early Comments on Boarding

- “young and reckless”
- “&*$/! Kids!”
- “It ruins the moguls.”
Recent Comments on Boarding

“Snowboarding saved skiing. Skiing was dead. The snowboard made skiers think about things. Skiers were going to have to do something.”

-- Norm Sayler, owner
Donner Ski Ranch
quoted in Evans, par. 10

Why the Change?

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<th>2004</th>
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<td>2.8</td>
<td>1.5</td>
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<td>22.6</td>
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<td>Average Days Per Year</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>7.5</td>
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*Source:* National Ski & Snowboard Retailers Association
Conclusions

Perceptions of snowboarders as reckless and boorish have changed because:

- Boarders are older – and perhaps more polite.
- Boarders ride frequently. Because ski areas recognize them as a significant source of revenue, they are making strong efforts to welcome them.
- Many skiers also snowboard.
- Boarding is no longer seen as unusual and threatening.

Works Cited

Evans, Jeremy. “Does the feud between skiers and snowboarders still exist?”

National Ski & Snowboard Retailers Association. “Snowboarding Participation”.


Links:

http://www.tahoe.com/article/20061127/SKIATLOHE.61127896
http://www.skihistory.de/
In your writer’s notebook, reflect on the ways in which this presentation supports Fisker’s analysis by responding to the following questions:

1. Fisker’s presentation refers to perceptions and misperceptions about snowboarders. Who is her intended audience, and how can you tell? How might the people attending the presentation in person interpret it differently than those who view the slides on the Web?

2. What sources does Fisker choose, and how do they support her claims? If you were to investigate this subject further, where would you look for more information?

3. In what ways does the PowerPoint format affect how the writer presents her ideas and evidence? Notice, for instance, Fisker’s choice of photographs and her use of bulleted points and tables instead of paragraphs of text. How do these choices help get her main idea across?

4. Fisker’s presentation serves as the foundation for a more thorough analysis, which is not included here. Choose one slide, and in a paragraph or two, try to reconstruct what her spoken comments might have been.

**Literary Criticism**

Literary criticism is the analysis of literature, broadly defined as works of fiction, poetry, drama, and creative nonfiction. Literary critics typically ask questions about the origins, goals, effects, influences, methods, meaning, or importance of a literary work. Scholarly writers usually base their interpretations on critical theories such as feminism, cultural materialism, and deconstruction, although they might also use specialized interpretive frameworks such as discourse analysis, semiotic analysis, or Freudian analysis. Regardless of their interpretive framework, however, most literary critics examine a work closely, looking for themes, patterns, meaning, and implications while considering the author’s techniques.

Literary criticism is most often shared in the form of an essay or article, but it can also take the form of a book, a blog, or a book review. Readers range widely in their knowledge of a subject. Readers of scholarly books, essays, and articles are frequently literary scholars who are experts in a particular literary period or form. Readers of literary criticism appearing in blogs or in publications such as the *New York Review of Books* range from those who have little or no knowledge of the subject to those who might easily have conducted the analysis themselves. Expert and novice readers alike expect writers to focus their analyses on literary issues, to make careful claims about their subject, and to support their analyses with evidence from the subject itself or from the work of others who have written about it.
Stephen King

J. K. Rowling’s Ministry of Magic

In this example of literary criticism for a popular audience, novelist Stephen King analyzes the literary merit of J. K. Rowling’s wildly successful Harry Potter series. While he carefully interprets and evaluates the novels on their own merit, King also contemplates “what Ms. Rowling has wrought.” In doing so, he provides insight into broader cultural questions, even as his analysis remains grounded in particular aspects of—and specific passages from—Rowling’s novels. Stephen King is an American author best known for his horror fiction stories and novels, which have sold hundreds of millions of copies; he also writes a regular column for Entertainment Weekly magazine, where this selection first appeared. In 2003, King won the National Book Foundation’s Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters.

J. K. Rowling’s Ministry of Magic

by Stephen King

And so now the hurly-burly’s done, the battle’s lost and won—the Battle of Hogwarts, that is—and all the secrets are out of the Sorting Hat. Those who bet Harry Potter would die lost their money; the boy who lived turned out to be exactly that. And if you think that’s a spoiler at this late date, you were never much of a Potter fan to begin with. The outrage over the early reviews (Mary Carole McCauley of The Baltimore Sun, Michiko Kakutani of The New York Times) has faded . . . although the sour taste lingers for many fans.

It lingers for me, too, although it doesn’t have anything to do with the ultimately silly concept of “spoilers,” or the ethics of jumping the book’s pub date. The prepublication vow of omertà was, after all, always a thing concocted by publishers Bloomsbury and Scholastic, and not — so far as I know — a part of either the British Magna Carta or the U.S. Constitution. Nor does Jo Rowling’s impassioned protest (“I am staggered that some American newspapers have decided to publish . . . reviews in complete disregard of the wishes of literally millions of readers, particularly children . . .”) cut much ice with me. These books ceased to be specifically for children halfway through the series; by Goblet of Fire, Rowling was writing for everyone, and knew it.

The clearest sign of how adult the books had become by the conclusion arrives — and splendidly — in Deathly Hallows, when Mrs. Weasley sees the odious Bellatrix Lestrange trying to finish off Ginny with a Killing Curse. “NOT MY DAUGHTER, YOU BITCH!” she cries. It’s the most shocking bitch in recent fiction; since there’s virtually no cursing (of the linguistic kind, anyway) in the Potter books, this one hits home with almost fatal force. It is totally correct in its context — perfect, really — but it is also a quintessentially adult response to a child’s peril.

The problem with the advance reviews — and those that followed in the first post-publication days — is one that has dogged Rowling’s magnum opus ever since book 4 (Goblet of Fire), after the series had become a worldwide phenomenon. Due to the Kremlin-like secrecy surrounding the books, all reviews since 2000 or so have been strictly shoot-from-the-lip. The reviewers themselves were often great — Ms. Kakutani ain’t exactly chopped liver — but the very popularity of the books has often undone even the best
intentions of the best critical writers. In their hurry to churn out column inches, and thus remain members of good standing in the Church of What's Happening Now, very few of the Potter reviewers have said anything worth remembering. Most of this microwaved critical mush sees Harry—not to mention his friends and his adventures—in only two ways: sociologically ("Harry Potter: Boon or Childhood Disease?") or economically ("Harry Potter and the Chamber of Discount Pricing"). They take a perfunctory wave at things like plot and language, but do little more . . . and really, how can they? When you have only four days to read a 750-page book, then write an 1,100-word review on it, how much time do you have to really enjoy the book? To think about the book? Jo Rowling set out a sumptuous seven-course meal, carefully prepared, beautifully cooked, and lovingly served out. The kids and adults who fell in love with the series (I among them) savored every mouthful, from the appetizer (Sorcerer's Stone) to the dessert (the gorgeous epilogue of Deathly Hallows). Most reviewers, on the other hand, bolted everything down, then obligingly puked it back up half-digested on the book pages of their respective newspapers.

And because of that, very few mainstream writers, from Salon to The New York Times, have really stopped to consider what Ms. Rowling has wrought, where it came from, or what it may mean for the future. The blogs, by and large, haven't been much better. They seem to care about who lives, who dies, and who's tattling. Beyond that, it's all pretty much duh.

So what did happen? Where did this Ministry of Magic come from?

Well, there were straws in the wind. While the academics and bighead education critics were moaning that reading was dead and kids cared about nothing but their XBoxes, iPods, Avril Lavigne, and High School Musical, the kids they were worried about were quietly turning on to the novels of one Robert Lawrence Stine. Known in college as “Jovial Bob” Stine, this fellow gained another nickname later in life, as — ahem — “the Stephen King of children's literature.” He wrote his first teen horror novel (Blind Date) in 1986, years before the advent of Pottermania . . . but soon you couldn't glance at a USA Today best-seller list without seeing three or four of his paperbacks bobbing around in the top 50.

These books drew almost no critical attention — to the best of my knowledge, Michiko Kakutani never reviewed Who Killed the Homecoming Queen? — but the kids gave them plenty of attention, and R. L. Stine rode a wave of kid popularity, partly fueled by the fledgling Internet, to become perhaps the best-selling children's author of the 20th century. Like Rowling, he was a Scholastic author, and I have no doubt that Stine's success was one of the reasons Scholastic took a chance on a young and unknown British writer in the first place. He's largely unknown and uncredited . . . but of course John the Baptist never got the same press as Jesus either.

Rowling has been far more successful, critically as well as financially, because the Potter books grew as they went along. That, I think, is their great secret (and not so secret at that; to understand the point visually, buy a ticket to Order of the Phoenix and check out former cutie Ron Weasley towering over Harry and Hermione). R. L. Stine's kids are kids forever, and the kids who enjoyed their adventures grew out of them, as inevitably as they outgrew their childhood Nikes. Jo Rowling's kids grew up . . . and the audience grew up with them.

This wouldn't have mattered so much if she'd been a lousy writer, but she wasn't — she was and is an incredibly gifted novelist. While some of the blogs and the mainstream media have mentioned that Rowling's ambition kept pace with the skyrocketing popularity of her books, they have largely overlooked the fact that her talent also grew. Talent is not static, it's always growing or dying, and the short form on Rowling is this: She was far better than R. L. Stine (an adequate but flavorless writer) when she started, but by the time she penned the final line of Deathly Hallows (“All was well.”), she had become one of the finer stylists in her native country — not as good as Ian McEwan or Ruth Rendell (at least not yet), but easily the peer of Beryl Bainbridge or Martin Amis.

And, of course, there was the magic. It's what kids want more than anything; it's what they crave. That goes back to the Brothers Grimm, Hans Christian Andersen, and good old Alice, chasing after that wassally wabbit. Kids are always looking for the Ministry of Magic, and they usually find it.

It was children whom Ms. Rowling captivated first, demonstrating with the irrefutable logic of something like 10 bazillion books sold that kids are still perfectly willing to put aside their iPods and Game Boys and pick up a book . . . if the magic is there. That reading itself is magical is a thing I never doubted. I'd give a lot to know how many teenagers (and preteens) texted this message in the days following the last book's release: DON'T CALL ME TODAY I'M READING.

The same thing probably happened with R. L. Stine's Goosebumps books, but unlike Stine, Rowling brought adults
into the reading circle, making it much larger. This is hardly a unique phenomenon, although it seems to be one associated mainly with British authors (there was *Huckleberry Finn*, of course, a sequel to its YA little brother *Tom Sawyer*). *Alice in Wonderland* began as a story told to 10-year-old Alice Liddell by Charles Dodgson (a.k.a. Lewis Carroll); it is now taught in college Lit courses. And *Watership Down*, Richard Adams’s version of *The Odyssey* (featuring rabbits instead of humans), began as a story told to amuse the author’s preteen daughters, Juliet and Rosamond, on a long car drive. As a book, though, it was marketed as an “adult fantasy” and became an international best-seller.

Maybe it’s the British prose. It’s hard to resist the hypnosis of those calm and sensible voices, especially when they turn to make-believe. Rowling was always part of that straightforward storytelling tradition (Peter Pan, originally a play by the Scot J. M. Barrie, is another case in point). She never loses sight of her main theme—the power of love to turn bewildered, often frightened, children into decent and responsible adults—but her writing is all about story. She’s lucid rather than luminous, but that’s okay; when she does express strong feelings, she remains their mistress without denying their truth or power. The sweetest example in *Deathly Hallows* comes early, with Harry remembering his childhood years in the Dursley house, “It gave him an odd, empty feeling to remember those times,” Rowling writes, “I’ll be like remembering a younger brother whom he had lost.” Honest; nostalgic; not sloppy. It’s a small example of the style that enabled Jo Rowling to bridge the generation gap without breaking a sweat or losing the cheerful dignity that is one of the series’ great charms.

Her characters are lively and well-drawn, her pace is impeccable, and although there are occasional continuity drops, the story as a whole hangs together almost perfectly over its 4,000-plus page length.

And she’s in full possession of that famously dry British wit, as when Ron, trying to tune in an outlaw news broadcast on his wizard radio, catches a snatch of a pop song called “A Cauldron Full of Hot Strong Love.” Must have been some witchy version of Donna Summer doing that one. There’s also her wry send-up of the British tabloids—about which I’m sure she knows plenty—in the person of Rita Skeeter, perhaps the best name to be hung on a fictional character since those of Jonathan Swift. When Elphias Doge, the perfect magical English gentleman, calls Rita “an interfering trout,” I felt like standing up and giving a cheer. Take that, Page Six! There’s a lot of meat on the bones of these books—good writing, honest feeling, a sweet but uncompromising view of human nature—and hard reality: NOT MY DAUGHTER, YOU BITCH! The fact that Harry attracted adults as well as children has never surprised me.

Are the books perfect? Indeed not. Some sections are too long. In *Deathly Hallows*, for instance, there’s an awful lot of wandering around and camping in that tent; it starts to feel like Ms. Rowling running out the clock on the school year to fit the format of the previous six books.

And sometimes she falls prey to the Robinson Crusoe syndrome. In *Crusoe*, whenever the marooned hero requires something, he ventures out to his ship—which has conveniently run aground on the reef surrounding his desert island—and takes what he needs from stores (in one of the most amusing continuity flubs in the history of English literature, Robinson once swam out naked . . . then fills his pockets). In much the same manner, whenever Harry and his friends get into a tight corner, they produce some new spell—fire, water to douse the fire, stairs that conveniently turn into a slide—and squiggle free. I accepted most of these, partly because there’s enough child in me to react gleefully rather than doubtfully (in a way, the Potter books are *The Joy of Magic* rather than *The Joy of Cooking*) but also because I understand that magic is its own thing, and probably boundless. Still, by the time the Battle of Hogwarts was reaching its climax of clumping giants, cheering portraits, and flying wizards, I almost longed for someone to pull out a good old MAC-10 and start blasting away like Rambo.

If all those creative spells—produced at the right moment like the stuff from Crusoe’s ship—were a sign of creative exhaustion, it’s the only one I saw, and that’s pretty amazing. Mostly Rowling is just having fun, knocking herself out, and when a good writer is having fun, the audience is almost always having fun too. You can take that one to the bank (and, Reader, she did).

One last thing: The bighead academics seem to think that Harry’s magic will not be strong enough to make a
generation of nonreaders (especially the male half) into bookworms . . . but they wouldn't be the first to underestimate Harry's magic; just look at what happened to Lord Voldemort. And, of course, the bigheads would never have credited Harry's influence in the first place, if the evidence hadn't come in the form of best-seller lists. A literary hero as big as the Beatles? "Never happen!" the bigheads would have cried. "The traditional novel is as dead as Jacob Marley! Ask anyone who knows! Ask us, in other words!"

But reading was never dead with the kids. Au contraire, right now it's probably healthier than the adult version, which has to cope with what seems like at least 400 boring and pretentious "literary novels" each year. While the bigheads have been predicting (and bemoaning) the post-literate society, the kids have been supplementing their Potter with the narratives of Lemony Snicket, the adventures of teenage mastermind Artemis Fowl, Philip Pullman's challenging His Dark Materials trilogy, the Alex Rider adventures, Peter Abrahams's superb Ingrid Levin-Hill mysteries, the stories of those amazing traveling blue jeans. And of course we must not forget the unsinkable (if sometimes smelly) Captain Underpants. Also, how about a tip of the old tiara to R. L. Stine, Jo Rowling's jovial John the Baptist?

I began by quoting Shakespeare; I'll close with the Who: The kids are alright. Just how long they stay that way sort of depends on writers like J. K. Rowling, who know how to tell a good story (important) and do it without talking down (more important) or resorting to a lot of high-flown gibberish (vital). Because if the field is left to a bunch of intellectual Muggles who believe the traditional novel is dead, they'll kill the damn thing.

It's good make-believe I'm talking about. Known in more formal circles as the Ministry of Magic. J. K. Rowling has set the standard: It's a high one, and God bless her for it.

In your writer's notebook, consider how King responds to his writing situation by answering the following questions:

1. King discusses J. K. Rowling's readership as well as other critics' responses to the Harry Potter books. Who are King's intended readers? How is this audience related to (in King's words) "bighead academics" and "intellectual Muggles"?
2. King spends part of the essay discussing Rowling's prose style. How would you characterize King's own prose, in terms of its voice and tone?
3. At several points in the essay, King cites specific passages from the Harry Potter novels. What points does he make and support by using these textual examples?
4. Although King is analyzing Rowling's books in a broad context, he also uses personal experience and references to classic and popular literature to support his points. In what ways does his use of sources make him more credible—or less so?
5. Ever since King's own writings began to be taught in college courses (in the mid-1980s), some scholars and critics have argued that popular culture—and King's work in particular—does not merit academic study. In what ways might "J. K. Rowling's Ministry of Magic" represent King's response to these criticisms, on both a personal and an intellectual level?
Analytical Essays

Analytical essays offer a thorough, well-considered interpretation of a subject for readers who share the writer’s interest in the subject. Because just about anything is open to interpretation, analytical essays can address subjects as wide-ranging as political and social issues, sports, lifestyle, music and the arts, history, and science, to name only a few.

Because of the breadth of the subjects they consider, writers of analytical essays address a broad range of readers. When analytical essays are written for purposes such as publication in a magazine or on the Web, writers need to consider the readers who typically subscribe to the magazine or visit the Web site. When such essays are written for academic courses, writers are quite aware that their instructors are a primary audience, but they are aware as well of the importance of considering the needs, interests, knowledge, and backgrounds of other possible readers, such as classmates, friends, family, or members of a particular profession.

Tamara Draut

*Generation Debt*

Tamara Draut is director of the economic opportunity program at the public policy and advocacy organization Demos. Her work has also appeared in the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and *Newsweek*. “Generation Debt,” taken from her book *Strapped: Why America’s 20- and 30-Somethings Can’t Get Ahead*, considers the impact of college loans and credit card debt on younger Americans. The essay draws on evidence from sources to debunk stereotypes of debt-strapped college graduates as spendthrifts and offers a thoughtful, well-supported analysis of the subject.

**CHAPTER THREE**

*Generation Debt*

First job. First house. First child. These “firsts,” when strung together, traditionally signal the arrival of adulthood. Today, we can add dodging debt-collection calls and filing bankruptcy to the list. Between college debt and the spillover effects of paycheck paralysis, piling up debt has become a new rite of passage into adulthood. It’s not exactly the kind of generation-defining characteristic we wished for, but debt is perhaps the one
shared experience of our diverse generation. If our generation had its own branding campaign, it would be “Debt—you can’t leave home without it.”

While young people have more debt than previous generations had at the same age, the explosion in credit card debt is a pan-generational phenomenon. Over the last decade, seniors have racked up credit card debt in record amounts. Middle-class families are also sinking into credit card debt. Those little pieces of plastic have become the monkey on the back of our moms and dads, aunts and uncles, and even our grandmas and grandpas.

People struggling to pay back credit card bills get very little sympathy for their plight. This is especially true for young adults, who, conventional wisdom holds, are wildly decadent about their spending. When people think of a young woman in debt, they probably envision a closet full of shoes, Manolo Blahniks, no doubt, and a wardrobe rich with designer brands, splurges courtesy of a generous credit line. And, of course, empty kitchen cupboards because she’s out with friends most nights. If it’s a young man sinking in credit card debt, the stereotype that springs to mind is a hall closet full of the latest sports equipment, like Calloway Big Bertha golf clubs. The guy’s living room is furnished with a flat-screen television, replete with theater-surround sound. Bose speakers, naturally. His refrigerator is stocked with premium beers and not much else because he, too, always eats out.

These “kids” just need to learn some self-control.

Older adults, particularly parents, tend to be censorious about the endemic credit card debt facing this generation. Seventy percent of young adults with credit cards regularly carry balances on their cards that they don’t pay off each month, compared to just over half of all households (Draut and Silva 3). Journalists love to churn out articles about how young people are profligate spenders and have poor budgeting skills. According to Margaret Webb Pressler of the Washington Post, “The growth in credit card debt is about instant gratification and the inability to live within one’s means.” She has lots of company.

In fact, when it comes to credit card debt, America is full of finger-waggers. A survey that asked card holders about credit card usage found that most individuals think that other people don’t know how to use credit wisely—but that they themselves do (Durkin 628). Typical finger-wagging logic.

In reality, there is very little extravagance behind the under-34ers’ credit card debt. Most young adults have several grand in credit card debt with nothing to show for it. So, what exactly then are young adults charging? In interview after interview with young people all over the country, a few explanations emerged. The most common reason was the debt trap parked out front: car repairs. If the car is going to the shop, you might as well kiss a couple of hundred dollars good-bye, which most young adults don’t have in their bank accounts.

Another big budget buster for young adults is travel, particularly for college-educated young professionals, who often live far from family and have friends sprinkled throughout the country. These friends inevitably get married. An out-of-town wedding is a huge expense for young adults, one that contributes to the steady accumulation of credit card debt among twenty-somethings. To beg off is to lose a friend.

Aside from using credit cards to keep the car running, and maintain good relationships with friends and family, many young adults get into debt from charging up the requisite goods that come with leaving the nest. For young people who can’t or won’t turn to parents for help, credit cards become their high-interest version of a trust fund. It’s the money pot that allows them to put a down payment on an apartment and buy a bed,
sheets, towels, and a toilet brush. This plastic trust fund also helps them buy the basics of a professional wardrobe: two suits, one good pair of shoes, and a couple of nice shirts—all carefully chosen so the pieces can be mixed and matched, giving the illusion of a much bigger wardrobe. Before a year of postcollege life has passed, most grads are easily in for two to three thousand to the plastic behemoths. Then, if they get their first pink slip, they sink even deeper into debt.

In fact, in her most recent book, The Money Book for the Young, Fabulous and Broke, the best-selling financial guru Suze Orman changes her usual antidebt stance when it comes to young adults. Recognizing the weight of student loans and the abysmal condition of the economy, she says it’s okay for young adults to rely on credit cards to help meet monthly expenses, offering advice on how to best use credit cards during this fragile start-up period in a young person’s life (Orman 83–84). When one of America’s leading personal finance experts acknowledges that establishing an adult life now requires going into credit card debt, we’re seriously in trouble.

Her acknowledgment that young people often must and should rely on credit to get through the rough-and-tumble twenties reflects the upside-down reality of our lives. The need to rely on credit cards after college stems in large part from the enormous student loan shackles that define young adults’ entry into the real world. With the average college grad having to commit $200 or more every month to student loan payments, there’s a lot less wiggle room in the budget. If we took away some of that burden, it’s very likely credit card debt among young people would decline.

Works Cited


In your writer’s notebook, examine the strategies Draut uses to present her analysis by responding to the following questions:

1. Draut refers to the “conventional wisdom” and “finger-wagging logic” around debt (paras. 3 and 5). What do these and other examples tell you about Draut’s intended readers?

2. Draut asserts that “the explosion in credit card debt is a pan-generational phenomenon” (para. 2). What does this mean? What does her statement reveal about her purpose and the broad implications of her analysis?
3. Draut identifies a number of groups affected by credit card debt. How does she characterize each group? How do they differ from one another, and what do they have in common?

4. Draut uses quotations, paraphrases, and brief summaries of several sources, both to characterize the conversation surrounding her topic and to provide evidence to support her points. In what ways do her sources disagree about the causes of credit card debt among young Americans? Which side does Draut ultimately take? What does she add to the conversation?

5. “Generation Debt” seems to conclude that credit card debt has become an unavoidable — perhaps even a necessary — fact of young adult life. Do you agree? To what extent, if any, is Draut’s conclusion predetermined by the information she chooses to present? If you were to dispute Draut’s findings, what kinds of evidence would you look for?

How Can I Write an Analytical Essay?

Got questions? Got an inquiring mind? Got the discipline to follow up on a question carefully and thoroughly? If you answered “yes” to these questions, you’ve got what it takes to start writing an analytical essay.

That’s not all it takes, of course. Writing an analytical essay also involves refining your question, gaining a fuller understanding of your subject, applying an appropriate interpretive framework, and drafting your response to your analytical question. But the foundation of an analytical essay — and of all analytical documents, for that matter — is developing and responding to a question about a subject.

As you work on your analytical essay, you’ll follow the work of Ali Bizzul, a first-year student who wrote an analytical essay about the health risks football players face when they put on extra weight.

Find a Conversation and Listen In

Analytical essays allow you to share your interpretation of a subject with your readers. Your analysis will reflect not only your analytical question and interpretive framework but also what other writers involved in the conversation about your subject have written and the types of analyses they’ve conducted. It will also reflect the demands
of your writing assignment. To get started on your analytical essay, review your assignment and spend some time thinking about your writing situation: your purposes for writing; your readers’ needs, interests, knowledge, and background; potential sources of evidence; and the contexts that might affect your analysis (see p. 16). Then start generating ideas about the kinds of questions you could ask, find a conversation worth joining, and learn more about it.

**EXPLORE YOUR SURROUNDINGS**

Analysis is largely a search for patterns—and searching for patterns is something we do on a daily basis. As we learn to drive, for example, we start noticing the typical behaviors of other drivers as they approach an intersection. It doesn’t take long to learn that we can reliably predict whether other drivers are planning to go through the intersection, stop, turn left, or turn right—even when they fail to use turn signals. When we see behaviors that are unusual or unexpected, we go on alert, making sure that we aren’t hit by a driver who isn’t paying attention. Similarly, we look for patterns in everything from playing tennis (noticing, for instance, how a player grips the racket before returning a shot) to reading the newspaper (learning where we can find stories that interest us or how to distinguish news from advertisements).

Humans are quite good at identifying and responding to patterns. But it takes time to notice them and even more time to figure out how they work. Before choosing a specific focus for your analytical essay, identify general topics that might interest you enough to explore in depth. One good way to begin is to brainstorm (see p. 33), freewrite (see p. 34), or loop (see p. 34) about the objects and events that surround you.

- **Your shelves.** Scan your collection of music, books, and movies, and think about anything you’ve listened to, read, or watched that grabbed your attention. You might be rewarded by looking beneath the surface for meaning or themes, or you might find yourself intrigued by a plot line or a style that appears to be part of a larger trend.

- **The daily news.** Whether you follow current events in newspapers, on television, or on the Web, recent and ongoing news stories offer rich opportunities for analysis: Why were some groups offended by a magazine cover? Is third-party health insurance to blame for the high cost of medical care? How do “bad girl” celebrities influence children’s behavior? Be alert to the questions that occur to you as you read, to reactions (other people’s and your own) that surprise you, and to themes that seem to pop up from one day to the next. You’re likely to notice something you want to investigate further.

- **Your leisure activities.** No matter what you do for fun—participate in a sport, play video games, take photographs—you can probably find some aspects of your lifestyle that raise questions or suggest a trend. For instance,
perhaps you’ve wondered whether the X Games will become more popular than the Olympics, or noticed that interactive group games seem to be gaining popularity over first-person shooters.

• **Your physical environment.** Take a look around you. A favorite poster in your bedroom, for instance, might be a good candidate for interpretation. A new bank in town might inspire questions about interest rates, community service, or architectural style. An overflowing trash bin might suggest an analytical essay on recycling or municipal waste management.

As you consider possible topics for your writing project, look for new or surprising ideas that interest you and your readers and lend themselves to analysis. If you come across a subject or a question that makes a good candidate for your essay, add it to your writer’s notebook.

You’ll find additional writing project ideas at the end of this chapter (p. 266).

**ASK INTERPRETIVE QUESTIONS**

The foundation for analysis is a question that is open to interpretation. For example, asking whether you have enough money to purchase a ticket to the latest Will Smith movie would not require an interpretive response. Either you have enough money or you don’t. Asking whether Smith’s performance breaks new ground, however, would require an analysis of his work in the film. Similarly, while a driver wouldn’t need to conduct an analysis to determine whether a car has a full tank of fuel, a city planner might find it necessary to carry out an analysis to anticipate how high the cost of fuel must rise before commuters leave their cars at home and take public transportation.

You can generate potential interpretive questions about promising topics by brainstorming, freewriting, or clustering in response to the following prompts. Each prompt focuses your attention on a general topic in a different way, and each provides a useful starting point for an analytical essay. Depending on your topic, you’ll find that some prompts are more productive than others.

• **Elements.** Think about the subject in terms of its parts. How does it break down into smaller pieces, or how can it be divided in different ways? Which parts are most important, and which are less significant?

• **Categories.** What groups does the subject belong to? How is it similar to or different from other subjects in a particular group? How can comparing the subject to related subjects help you and your readers understand it in a new way?

• **History.** Look into the origins of the subject. What recent events are related to the subject, and what are the implications of those events? Does your subject
build on previous events? Will it continue to have influences in the future, and if so, how will it do so?

- **Causes and effects.** What caused the subject, and why is it the way it is? What are the subject’s influences on people, events, and objects? Who or what affects the subject? What effects is the subject likely (or unlikely) to cause in the future?

- **Relationships.** How is the subject connected to other ideas, events, or objects? For example, are changes in the subject related to changes in related ideas, events, or objects?

- **Meaning.** What is the subject’s significance and implications? Can different people find different meanings in the subject, and if so, why? Does a close examination of the subject reveal a new way of looking at it?

As you ponder ways to turn a general topic area into the subject of your analytical essay, spend time learning about other people’s answers to the most promising questions you’ve generated. You can discuss the subject with people you know, skim sources published on the subject, or even observe the subject firsthand. You can learn more about gathering information in Chapter 2 and in Part Three.

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**Working Together: Try It Out Loud**

Working in a small group, choose a popular song that everyone in your group likes, or choose one of the top songs of the week on Billboard or iTunes. Then use one set of the interpretive question prompts in the previous section to analyze the song. If you are doing this activity during class, the class might choose a single song, and each group might choose a different set of prompts. Take turns asking questions about the song while the other members of the group try to answer them. Record your answers, noting both agreements and disagreements. Your purpose is to interpret, so don’t get distracted by whether the song is good or bad; instead, focus on its significance and implications. If you are doing this activity during class, each group should report its results to the class.

When you are finished, take a few minutes to reflect on the activity. What did you learn about different ways of approaching an analysis? Did some interpretive question prompts produce more useful or interesting results than the others? How did examining the song from multiple perspectives affect your interpretation of it?

[Download or print this Working Together activity at bedfordstmartins.com/conversation.](http://bedfordstmartins.com/conversation)
SEARCH DATABASES
Once you’ve identified a promising question, learn whether — and how — other writers have attempted to answer it. Analytical essays tend to draw on information and analyses from other sources in addition to the writer’s personal knowledge and interpretation, so even if you already know a great deal about a subject, be sure to review other writers’ contributions to the conversation and to look for sources you can use to support your analysis.

Databases can give you an in-depth understanding of your subject, as well as a sense of useful interpretive frameworks, existing interpretations, and unanswered questions. They allow you to search for analyses that have been published on a particular subject or in a particular discipline. Although some databases, such as ERIC (eric.ed.gov), can be accessed publicly through the Web, most are available only through a library’s computers or Web site.

To identify databases that might be relevant to the subject you are analyzing, review your library’s list of databases or consult a reference librarian. The following questions can get you started.

- **Has the subject been addressed in recent news coverage?** If so, consider searching databases that focus on newspapers and weekly magazines, such as LexisNexis Academic, ProQuest Newspapers, or Alternative Press Index.

- **Is the subject related to a broad area of interest, such as business, education, or government?** If so, search databases that focus on general publications, such as Academic Search Premier, Articles First, or Catalog of U.S. Government Publications.

- **Is the subject related to a particular profession or academic discipline?** If so, consult databases that focus on that area. Many libraries provide guidance on which databases are relevant to a particular profession or discipline.

- **Have I already identified any promising sources?** By searching citation indexes (databases that identify sources that cite a particular source), you can identify additional sources that refer to the sources you already have. Depending on your subject, you might search the Science Citation Index, Social Sciences Citation Index, or Arts & Humanities Citation Index.

- **Is the full text of the source available?** Full-text databases offer the complete source for viewing or downloading. They cut out the middle step of searching for the physical periodical that published the article. If you don’t know whether your library owns the sources provided by a database, or if you would simply like to locate them more quickly, consider using full-text databases. Databases
such as Academic Search Premier, ERIC, and LexisNexis Academic offer some or all of their sources in full text.

Generate keywords and phrases that are related to your interpretive question, and search a few different databases for potential resources. Using the citation information provided by the database, check your library’s online catalog for the title of the publication in which the article appears. Your library might own many of the sources you’ll identify through a database search, but if it doesn’t, you can usually request promising materials through interlibrary loan.

You can read more about searching databases in Chapter 12.

**Conduct Your Analysis**

An analytical essay helps readers understand the origins, qualities, significance, or potential effects of a subject. A successful essay builds on a carefully crafted analytical question, a thorough understanding of the subject, and a rigorous and fair application

**Searching Databases**

Ali Bizzul used her interpretive question—*Why do so many football players risk their health by adding extra weight?*—to develop search terms for searches of her library’s databases. She knew from exploring her subject that it had been addressed in newspapers and magazines, so she searched databases such as LexisNexis Academic and Newspaper Source. Because she also wondered whether scientific studies had been conducted on the subject, she also searched the MedLine and PubMed databases.
of an appropriate interpretive framework. It also builds on a clear understanding of your writing situation.

**REFINE YOUR QUESTION**

Begin your analysis by reviewing the interpretive questions you generated about your subject (see p. 235). Choose one that interests you and will allow you to carry out your assignment. Then review and refine your question. Ask yourself:

- How might I respond to this question? Will my response be complex enough to justify writing an essay about it? Will it be too complex for my assignment?
- Is the question appropriate for the conversation that I’m planning to join?
- Will the question help me accomplish my purposes?
- Will my response interest my readers or address their needs?

A good analytical question is open to interpretation. Questions that focus on factual or yes/no answers seldom provide a strong foundation for an analytical essay. In contrast,

![Ali's Search Results](image)

1. **Ali's Search Results**

Ali's database searches produced sources in newspapers, magazines, and academic journals. She located one of the articles, a brief “letter” written by Joyce Harp and Lindsay Hecht, and printed it.
questions that lead you to investigate the origins or potential impacts of a subject, consider its qualities, weigh its significance, or explore its meaning are more likely to lead to success. Consider the differences between the following sets of questions.

**Questions Leading to Factual and Yes/No Answers**

- When did the Iraq War begin?
- Has NASA’s annual budget kept pace with inflation?
- Who were the villains in the latest Indiana Jones movie?
- Who won the last World Series?

**Questions Open to Interpretation**

- What caused the Iraq War?
- How can NASA pursue its mission on a reduced annual budget?
- In what ways do the key themes of the latest Indiana Jones movie reflect changes in American foreign relations?
- What contributed to the success of the last World Series champions?

You should also consider how a question will direct your thinking about your subject. For example, you might want to understand the potential effects of a proposal to reduce the cost of attending your state’s public colleges and universities by increasing class size and laying off faculty and staff. Asking a question about the plan’s impact on education might direct your attention toward students and the trade-offs between lower costs and the quality of instruction. In contrast, asking a question about the plan’s impact on the state budget might lead you to view the subject through the lens of business concerns and economic forecasts. Although the questions are related, they would lead to significantly different analyses.

**SEEK A FULLER UNDERSTANDING OF YOUR SUBJECT**

If you’ve ever talked with people who don’t know what they’re talking about but nonetheless are certain of their opinions, you’ll recognize the dangers of applying an interpretive framework before you thoroughly understand your subject. To enhance your understanding of your subject, use division and classification. Division allows you to identify the elements that make up a subject. Classification allows you to explore a subject in relation to other subjects and to consider the similarities, differences, and relationships among its elements.

**Division.** Division breaks a subject into its parts and considers what each contributes to the whole. A financial analyst, for example, might examine the various groups within a company to understand what each group does and how it contributes to the overall value of the company. Similarly, a literary critic might consider how each scene in a play relates to other scenes and how it contributes to the play’s major theme.
As you use division to examine a subject, keep in mind the following guidelines:

- **Pick a focus.** Division can take place on many levels. Just as you can divide numbers in different ways (100, for example, can be seen as ten 10s, five 20s, four 25s, and so on), you can divide subjects differently. A government agency, for instance, might be considered in terms of its responsibilities, its departments, or its employees. Trying to understand all of these aspects at once, however, would be difficult and unproductive. Use your analytical question as a guide to determine how best to divide your subject.

- **Examine the parts.** Most subjects can be thought of as a system of interrelated parts. As you divide your subject, determine what role each part plays, individually and in relation to other parts.

- **Assess contributions to the whole.** As you divide a subject, be sure to consider the contributions that each part makes to the larger whole. In some cases, you’ll find that a part is essential. In other cases, you’ll find that it makes little or no contribution to the whole.

Even though you can divide and reassemble a subject in a variety of ways, always take into account your purpose and your readers’ needs, interests, and expectations. It might be easier to focus on a government agency’s departments than on its functions, but if your question focuses on how the agency works or what it does, you’ll be more successful if you examine its functions.

**Classification.** Classification places your subject—or each part of your subject—into a category. By categorizing a subject or its parts, you can discover how and to what extent your subject or a part of your subject is similar to others in the same category and how it differs from those in other categories. Identifying those similarities and differences, in turn, allows you to consider the subject, or its parts, in relation to the other items in your categories. As you use classification to gain a better understanding of your subject, consider the following guidelines:

- **Choose a classification scheme.** The categories you work with might be established already, or you might create them specifically to support your analysis. For example, if you are analyzing state representatives, you might place them into standard categories: Democrat, Republican, Libertarian, Green, and so on. Or you might create categories especially for your analysis, such as who voted for and against particular types of legislation.

- **Look at both similarities and differences.** When you place an item in a category, you decide that it is more similar to the other items in the category than to those in other categories. However, even though the items in a broad category will share many similarities, they will also differ in important ways.
Botanists, for example, have developed a complex system of categories and subcategories to help them understand general types of plants (such as algae, roses, and corn) as well as consider subtle differences among similar plants (such as corn bred for animal feed, for human consumption, and for biofuels).

- **Justify your choices.** Your decisions about what to place in a given category will be based on your definition of the category, if you’ve created it yourself, or your understanding of categories that have been established by someone else. In most cases, you’ll need to explain why a particular category is the best fit for your subject. If you wanted readers to accept your classification of Wal-Mart as a mom-and-pop retailer, for instance, you would have to explain that your category is defined by origin (not current size) and then inform readers that the chain started as a single discount store in Arkansas.

Classification and division are often used in combination, particularly when you want to consider similarities and differences among different parts of your subject. For example, if you are examining a complex organization, you might use division to analyze each department; in addition, you might use classification so that you can analyze groups of departments that have similar functions, such as customer service and technical support, and contrast those departments with departments in other categories, such as sales, marketing, and research and development.

**APPLY AN INTERPRETIVE FRAMEWORK**

An interpretive framework is a set of strategies for identifying patterns that has been used successfully and refined over time by writers interested in a given subject area or working in a particular field. Writers can choose from hundreds (perhaps thousands) of specialized frameworks used in disciplines across the arts, sciences, social sciences, humanities, engineering, and business. A historian, for example, might apply a feminist, social, political, or cultural analysis to interpret diaries written by women who worked in defense plants during World War II, while a sociologist might conduct correlational tests to interpret the results of a survey. In a writing course, you’ll most likely use one of the broad interpretive frameworks discussed here: trend analysis, causal analysis, data analysis, and text analysis.

By definition, analysis is subjective. Your interpretation will be shaped by the question you ask, the sources you consult, and your personal experience and perspective. But analysis is also conducted within the context of a written conversation. As you consider your choice of interpretive framework, reflect on the interpretive frameworks you encounter in your sources and those you’ve used in the past. Keep in mind that different interpretive frameworks will lead to different ways of seeing and understanding a subject. The key to success is choosing one that can guide you as you try to answer your question.
**Trend analysis.** Trends are patterns that hold up over time. Trend analysis, as a result, focuses on sequences of events and the relationships among them. It is based on the assumption that understanding what has happened in the past allows us to make sense of what is happening in the present and to draw inferences about what is likely to happen in the future.

Trends can be identified and analyzed in nearly every field, from politics to consumer affairs to the arts. For example, many economists have analyzed historical accounts of fuel crises in the 1970s to understand the recent surge in fuel prices. Sports and entertainment analysts also use trend analysis—to forecast the next NBA champion, for instance, or to explain the reemergence of superheroes in popular culture during the last decade.

To conduct a trend analysis, follow these guidelines:

- **Gather information.** Trend analysis is most useful when it relies on an extensive set of long-term observations. By examining news reports about NASA since the mid-1960s, for example, you can determine whether the coverage of
the U.S. space program has changed over time. By examining these changes, you
can decide whether a trend exists. You might find, for instance, that the press
has become progressively less positive in its treatment of the U.S. space
program. However, if you don’t gather enough information to thoroughly
establish the trend, your readers might lack confidence in your conclusions.

- **Establish that a trend exists.** Some analysts seem willing to declare a trend on
  the flimsiest set of observations: when a team wins an NFL championship for
  the second year in a row, for instance, fans are quick to announce the start of a
dynasty. As you look for trends, cast a wide net. Learn as much as you can about
the history of your subject, and carefully assess it to determine how often events
related to your subject have moved in one direction or another. By understand-
ning the variations that have occurred over time, you can better judge whether
you’ve actually found a trend.

- **Draw conclusions.** Trend analysis allows you to understand the historical
  context that shapes a subject and, in some cases, to make predictions about the
subject. The conclusions you draw should be grounded strongly in the evidence
you’ve collected. They should also reflect your writing situation — your pur-
poses, readers, and context. As you draw your conclusions, exercise caution.
Ask whether you have enough information to support your conclusions.
Search for evidence that contradicts your conclusions. Most important, on
the basis of the information you’ve collected so far, ask whether your conclu-
sions make sense.

**Causal analysis.** Causal analysis focuses on the factors that bring about a particular
situation. It can be applied to a wide range of subjects, such as the dot-com collapse
in the late 1990s, the rise of terrorist groups, or the impact of calorie restriction on
longevity. Writers carry out causal analysis when they believe that understanding the
underlying reasons for a situation will help people address the situation, increase the
likelihood of its happening again, or appreciate its potential consequences.

In many ways, causal analysis is a form of detective work. It involves tracing a sequence
of events and exploring the connections among them. Because the connections are
almost always more complex than they appear, it pays to be thorough. If you choose
to conduct a causal analysis, keep in mind the following guidelines:

- **Uncover as many causes as you can.** Effects rarely emerge from a single cause.
  Most effects are the results of a complex web of causes, some of which are
  related to one another and some of which are not. Although it might be tempt-
ing, for example, to say that a murder victim died (the effect) from a gunshot
wound (the cause), that would tell only part of the story. You would need to
work backward from the murderer’s decision to pull the trigger to the factors
Causal analysis involves tracing connections among events.

that led to that decision, and then further back to the causes underlying those factors.

Effects can also become causes. While investigating the murder, for instance, you might find that the murderer had long been envious of the victim's success, that he was jumpy from the steroids he’d been taking in an ill-advised attempt to qualify for the Olympic trials in weight lifting, and that he had just found his girlfriend in the victim’s arms. Exploring how these factors might be related—and determining when they are not—will help you understand the web of causes leading to the effect.

• **Determine which causes are significant.** Not all causes contribute equally to an effect. Perhaps our murderer was cut off on the freeway on his way to meet his girlfriend. Lingering anger at the other driver might have been enough to push him over the edge, but it probably wouldn't have caused the shooting by itself.

• **Distinguish between correlation and cause.** Too often, we assume that because one event occurred just before another, the first event caused the second. We might conclude that finding his girlfriend with another man drove the murderer to shoot in a fit of passion—only to discover that he had begun planning the murder months before, when the victim threatened to reveal his use of steroids to the press just prior to the Olympic trials.

• **Look beyond the obvious.** A thorough causal analysis considers not only the primary causes and effects but also those that might appear only slightly related
to the subject. For example, you might consider the immediate effects of the murder not only on the victim and perpetrator but also on their families and friends, on the wider community, on the lawyers and judges involved in the case, on an overburdened judicial system, even on attitudes toward Olympic athletes. By looking beyond the obvious causes and effects, you can deepen your understanding of the subject and begin to explore a much wider set of implications than you might have initially expected.

**Data analysis.** Data is any type of information, such as facts and observations, and is often expressed numerically. Most of us analyze data in an informal way on a daily basis. For example, if you’ve looked at the percentage of people who favor a particular political candidate over another, you’ve engaged in data analysis. Similarly, if you’ve checked your bank account to determine whether you have enough money for a new coat, you’ve carried out a form of data analysis. As a writer, you can analyze numerical information related to your subject to better understand the subject as a whole, to look for differences among the subject’s parts, and to explore relationships among the parts.

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1. Data analysis can involve assessing information from a variety of sources.
Applying Interpretive Frameworks

Ali Bizzul used a combination of trend analysis and causal analysis in her essay about the health risks football players face as they put on weight. After reading several reports of a rise in heat-related injuries among larger players (the effects), she tried to identify the factors contributing to this trend (the causes). Drawing on information from an article about obesity among players in the National Football League, she used freewriting to explore her ideas.

The study shows that football players, especially the guards, are becoming increasingly larger. 97% overweight and many of those class 2 and 3 obese. This is crazy. It causes health problems, such as high blood pressure and heart failure. It was also shown that it didn’t really help rankings, so why would they do it? It is all in the minds of people. It is common sense that a bigger guy running into you is going to stop you better than a smaller guy. Even though it doesn’t help scores, it can help in the defensive area. These men, the guards, are meant to be a sort of battering ram and are not hired for their speed and agility. The high school kids are seeing this on TV and thinking that they have to be just as large as the guys in the NFL. So they think that all they need to do is bulk up, but find that they can’t carry the weight as well and it hurts more than it helps. Coaches are doing their part to help these guys stay healthy, but they don’t really seem to try to educate their students about the implications of being overweight. They are just telling them to lose some weight, and that is just on a case-to-case basis. It really is just in these kids’ minds. They think that the only way they will be noticed by recruiters is to be big and able to throw their weight around. Don’t present a solution, just explain why it is happening. . . . Everyone believes that bigger is better. But it isn’t. It is going to kill these guys, and it is setting a bad example for the younger generation.

To begin a data analysis, gather your data and enter the numbers into a spreadsheet or statistics program. You can use the program’s tools to sort the data and conduct
tests. If your set of data is small, you can use a piece of paper and a calculator. As you carry out your analysis, keep the following guidelines in mind:

- **Do the math.** Let’s say you conducted a survey of student and faculty attitudes about a proposed change to the graduation requirements at your school. Tabulating the results might reveal that 52 percent of your respondents were female, 83 percent were between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two, 38 percent were juniors or seniors, and 76 percent were majoring in the biological sciences. You might also find, of the faculty who responded, 75 percent were tenured. Based on these numbers, you could draw conclusions about whether the responses are representative of your school’s overall population. If they are not, you might decide to ask more people to take your survey. Once you’re certain that you’ve collected enough data, you can draw conclusions about the overall results and determine, for example, the percentage of respondents who favored, opposed, or were undecided about the proposed change.

- **Categorize your data.** Difference tests can help you make distinctions among groups. To classify the results of your survey, for example, you might compare male and female student responses. Similarly, you might examine differences in the responses between other groups — such as faculty and students; tenured and untenured faculty; and freshmen, sophomore, juniors, and seniors. To carry out your analysis, you might look at each group’s average level of agreement with the proposed changes. Or you might use statistical techniques such as T-Tests, which offer more sensitive assessments of difference than comparisons of averages. You can conduct these kinds of tests using spreadsheet programs, such as Microsoft Excel, or statistical programs, such as SAS and SPSS.

- **Explore relationships.** Correlation tests allow you to draw conclusions about your subject. For example, you might want to know whether support for proposed changes to graduation requirements increases or decreases according to GPA. A correlation test might indicate that a positive relationship exists — that support goes up as GPA increases. Be cautious, however, as you examine relationships. In particular, be wary of confusing causation with correlation. Tests will show, for example, that as shoe size increases, so do scores on reading tests. Does this mean that large feet improve reading? Not really. The cause of higher reading scores appears to be attending school longer. High school students tend to score better on reading tests than do students in elementary school — and, on average, high school students tend to have much larger feet. As is the case with difference tests, you can use many spreadsheet and statistical programs to explore relationships. If your set of data is small enough, you can also use a piece of paper to examine it.

- **Be thorough.** Take great care to ensure the integrity of your analysis. You will run into problems if you collect too little data, if the data is not representative,
or if the data is collected sloppily. Similarly, you should base your conclusions on a thoughtful and careful examination of the results of your tests. Picking and choosing evidence that supports your conclusion might be tempting, but you’ll do a disservice to yourself and your readers if you fail to consider all the results of your analysis.

Text analysis. Today, the word text can refer to a wide range of printed or digital works—and even some forms of artistic expression that we might not think of as documents. Texts open to interpretation include novels, poems, plays, essays, articles, movies, speeches, blogs, songs, paintings, photographs, sculptures, performances, Web pages, videos, television shows, and computer games.

Students enrolled in writing classes often use the elements of literary analysis to analyze texts. In this form of analysis, interpreters focus on theme, plot, setting, characterization, imagery, style, and structure, as well as the contexts—social, cultural, political, and historical—that shape a work. Writers who use this form of analysis focus both on what is actually presented in the text and what is implied or conveyed “between the lines.” They rely heavily on close reading of the text to discern meaning, critique an author’s technique, and search for patterns that help them understand the

In the song “What is New Orleans, Part 2,” recorded by Kermit Ruffins and the Rebirth Brass Band, a call-and-response pattern structures both the lyrics (“What is New Orleans? New Orleans is . . .”) and also the interaction between Ruffins and the musicians. Frequently, after Ruffins sings a pattern of syllables, the musicians echo or answer him, as though the music itself is to be considered a sufficient response. Meanwhile, the song’s lyrics highlight the importance of food in the city’s culture by beginning with a list of meals. Each meal is associated with a specific time and day of the week, giving the impression that the rest of the week’s events are scheduled around these meals. Ruffins then lists musicians and locations, moving from the specific to the general, from individual lounges to entire neighborhoods.

1. Text analysis can focus on a wide range of artistic expression.
text as fully as possible. They also tend to consider other elements of the wider writing situation in which the text was produced—in particular, the author’s purpose, intended audience, use of sources, and choice of genre.

If you carry out a text analysis, keep the following guidelines in mind:

- **Focus on the text itself.** In any form of text analysis, the text should take center stage. Although you will typically reflect on the issues raised by your interpretation, maintain a clear focus on the text in front of you, and keep your analysis grounded firmly in what you can locate within it. Background information and related sources, such as scholarly articles and essays, can support and enhance your analysis, but they can’t do the work of interpretation for you.

- **Consider the text in its entirety.** Particularly in the early stages of learning about a text, it is easy to be distracted by a startling idea or an intriguing concept. Try not to focus on a particular aspect of the text, however, until you’ve fully reviewed all of it. You might well decide to narrow your analysis to a particular aspect of the text, but lay the foundation for a fair, well-informed interpretation by first considering the text as a whole.

- **Avoid “cherry-picking.”** Cherry-picking refers to the process of using only those materials from a text that support your overall interpretation and ignoring aspects that might weaken or contradict your interpretation. As you carry out your analysis, factor in all the evidence. If the text doesn’t support your interpretation, rethink your conclusions.

**Prepare a Draft**

As you prepare to draft your analytical essay, you’ll decide how to present the results of your analysis to your readers. Your draft will reflect not only your conclusions and your interpretive framework but also what others involved in the conversation have written about your subject and the types of analyses they’ve conducted. As you write, you’ll focus on making an interpretive claim, explaining your interpretation, designing your essay, and framing your analysis.

**MAKE AN INTERPRETIVE CLAIM**

Your interpretive claim is a brief statement—usually in the form of a thesis statement (see Chapter 15)—that helps readers understand the overall results of your analysis. Essentially, it’s a one- or two-sentence answer to your interpretive question. Just as your question should be open to interpretation, your claim should be open to debate. If it simply repeats the obvious—either because it is factually true or because it has long been agreed to by those involved in your written conversation—it will do little to advance the conversation.
Your claim will frame your readers’ understanding of your subject in a particular way. It will also reflect the interpretive framework you’ve decided to use. Consider the differences among the following claims about distance running:

Evidence collected since the mid-1990s suggests that distance running can enhance self-image among college students.

Although a carefully monitored exercise program built around distance running appears to have positive effects for most cardiac patients, heart attack survivors who engage in at least two hours of running each week have a 30 percent higher survival rate than coronary artery bypass surgery patients who engage in the same amount of distance running.

Since 2000, distance running has undergone a resurgence in the United States, allowing the country to regain its standing as a leader in the international running community.

Distance running, when it is addressed at all in contemporary novels, is usually used to represent a desire to escape from the pressures of modern life.

Each of these interpretive claims would lead a writer to focus on different aspects of the subject, and each would reflect a different interpretive framework. The first calls readers’ attention to a causal relationship between distance running and mental health. The second explores differences in the effect of distance running on two groups of cardiac patients. The third directs attention to a trend analysis of increasing competitiveness among elite distance runners. And the fourth makes a claim about how distance running is treated in literature.

**EXPLAIN YOUR INTERPRETATION**

People who read analyses are intelligent, curious people. They want to know more than just what you think of a subject; they want to know how you arrived at your interpretation and why your analysis is reasonable. Your readers won’t always agree with your interpretation, and that’s fine—but even if you can’t persuade them to accept your analysis, you do want to convince readers that your take on the subject is insightful and well considered.

**Provide relevant reasons for your interpretation.** Build on your interpretive claim by presenting reasons for your readers to accept your analysis. The overall results of your analysis form your main point, and the reasons to accept your analysis become your supporting points.

Look over the results of your analysis, and ask yourself why readers should agree with your interpretation. You might come up with more reasons than you can possibly use—or you might find yourself struggling to find enough reasons to support your claim. Either way, try to generate as many potential reasons as possible, taking care not to rule out any at first, no matter how trivial or ridiculous they might seem.
Working Together: Generate Reasons for Your Interpretation

The goal of this collaborative activity is to generate potential reasons supporting your interpretation of your subject. You can work in person or online (using chat, instant messaging, or a threaded discussion forum). If you are working face-to-face, one member of the group should take notes on the discussion. If you are using a chat or instant-messaging program, be sure to record a transcript of the session.

To carry out the activity, follow these steps:

1. One writer should describe his or her writing project, the overall results of the analysis, and the reasons that will be offered to support the analysis.

2. Each member of the group should help evaluate the reasons identified by the writer. Are the reasons sound, appropriate, and credible?

3. Each member of the group should also suggest additional reasons the writer might consider.

When the exchange is completed, turn to the next writer and repeat the process.

Once you have generated a substantial list of potential reasons, select the ones that seem most likely to convince your readers that your analysis is sound. Some reasons will be more relevant than others. Rather than list every possible reason to accept your analysis, identify those reasons that are most directly related to your interpretive claim. The reasons you choose should also be consistent with the interpretive framework you’ve decided to follow. For example, you might find several reasons to support your analysis of a new novel’s significance, among them comments published in literary journals such as Proceedings of the Modern Language Association and endorsements by celebrities such as Oprah Winfrey and Madonna. If you are using text analysis as your interpretive framework, you might find commentary offered by authorities in the field of literary studies more useful than celebrity endorsements.

Support your reasons with evidence. No matter which reasons you choose, each of them must be supported by evidence. Analytical essays tend to rely on a mix of evidence from the subject itself (particularly in the case of text analyses), from the writer’s reflections and personal experience, and from published or field sources. Evidence can include the following:

- language or images from a text that is being analyzed
- quotations, paraphrases, and summaries from published sources such as reports and journal articles
• illustrations in the form of images, charts, graphs, and tables
• statements from personal interviews
• notes from an observation
• numerical information

You can use evidence to provide examples and illustrations, to define ideas and concepts, to illustrate processes, and to associate particular ideas and concepts with authorities, such as political leaders, subject-matter experts, or people who have been affected by the subject.

To organize your evidence, list all the reasons you will use to support your overall analysis, review your notes to find evidence that supports each reason, and then list the evidence below each reason. You might need to review your sources to locate additional evidence, or even obtain additional sources. If you are conducting a text analysis, be careful to avoid cherry-picking your evidence (see p. 250). If you are conducting another type of analysis, make sure that you haven’t relied too heavily on a single source of evidence.

You can read more about how to use evidence to support your analysis in Chapter 15.

**Supporting Reasons with Evidence**

Ali Bizzul identified three major reasons to support her interpretive claim that gaining weight hurts football players more than it helps:

- Reason 1: Heat-related injuries associated with the use of diet supplements
- Reason 2: Long-term health problems associated with obesity
- Reason 3: Decrease in athletic performance

Ali used each of these reasons as the basis for a general statement in her draft. Here is her preliminary list of evidence to support her second reason, the long-term health problems associated with obesity:

The extra weight gained for football can complicate the health of ex-athletes:

- high blood pressure (Harp and Hecht)
- sleep-disordered breathing (Harp and Hecht)
- joint damage/arthrosis (Groeschen)
- heart disease (Korth, Longman)
- diabetes (Korth, Longman)

As she drafted her essay, Ali used her lists of evidence to remind herself of sources she might turn to while making her points.
Establish the context. It’s quite possible—even likely—that others involved in a conversation will have conducted their own analyses of your subject. Be sure to check for those analyses so that you can place your analysis in a larger context. Ideally, you’ll be able to present your interpretation as a contribution to a growing understanding of the subject, rather than simply as an isolated set of observations.

As you draft your analytical essay, keep in mind the other interpretations you’ve encountered. Review the sources you consulted as you learned about your subject and conducted your analysis. If you find reasonable interpretations that support—or contradict—yours, consider how to address them in your essay. You might offer similar interpretations to back up one or more of your reasons, or you might explain why another writer’s analysis is less adequate than your own. In either case, you should briefly define significant existing analyses for your readers and explain how your interpretation complicates or improves upon what’s been said before. You might also need to draw on evidence from other sources or from the subject itself.

CONSIDER GENRE AND DESIGN
A well-written analytical essay uses design for three primary reasons: to improve readability, to simplify the presentation of complex concepts and information, and to enhance the writer’s ability to achieve his or her goals.

As you contemplate design options for your essay, make note of any formatting requirements specified in your assignment (such as margins, spacing, font, and the like). Consider as well the expectations of your readers, particularly your instructor. You might also think about including visual evidence such as figures and images.

- Figures, such as charts and graphs, can help readers better understand complex concepts or see trends that would be difficult to discern through textual descriptions alone. A chart, for example, can clearly show comparative cost figures for a state plan to subsidize public transportation. A graph could show changes over time in ridership of those who use trains, buses, subways, or private automobiles.

- Images, particularly when you are analyzing a visual text such as a photograph, video, or painting, can help readers better understand the subject and increase the likelihood that they’ll accept your interpretation as valid and well founded.

- Captions are a necessary complement to figures and images. Be sure to include a caption for each figure or image in your essay. At a minimum, a caption should provide a figure number cross-referenced in the text, a descriptive label, and source information. You can also use the caption to briefly describe what is shown and to explain what it contributes to your analysis.
Using a Figure to Support a Point

Ali Bizzul found a chart in a research study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. She included it in her essay as evidence to support a point in her analysis of the health risks associated with weight gain among football players.

Heatstroke is not the only danger associated with increased size. Excess weight can cause serious health problems, even if some of the pounds are due to high muscle mass. According to Harp and Hecht (2005), two researchers at the University of North Carolina who conducted a study of 2,168 professional football players competing in the 2003–2004 season, 97% of NFL players would be considered “overweight” and 56% “obese” under the Body Mass Index (BMI) guidelines published by the National Institutes of Health for men in their twenties (see Fig. 1).

The researchers noted that the group of football players with the highest rates of obesity—the linemen—also had higher blood pressure readings and higher incidences of sleep-disordered breathing than any other group of football players. It appears that athletes are not immune to the effects of obesity, in spite of their active lifestyles.

![Fig. 1. Percentage of NFL players in National Institutes of Health Body Mass Index categories.](chart)


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**A Chart Used as Evidence**

Text is "wrapped" around the figure.

The illustration has a caption. The source of the illustration is identified in a note below the caption.

All refers to the figure in parentheses. She places the figure close to the point where she mentions it.
FRAME YOUR ANALYSIS

The results of your analysis will be strongly influenced by your interpretive question, interpretive framework, and sources of evidence. You can increase the odds that your readers will accept your conclusions if you help them understand your choices.

Introduction. Rather than launching immediately into your interpretation, begin by introducing readers to your subject and explaining its significance. Provide enough information about your subject—in the form of a summary or description of a text, an overview of a trend, or a report of a recent event—to help readers understand your focus and follow your line of thinking. Another useful strategy is to start by offering some context about the conversation you’ve decided to join. Consider, for example, how Stephen King begins his analysis of the Harry Potter series.

The problem with the advance reviews—and those that followed in the first post-publication days—is one that has dogged Rowling’s magnum opus ever since book 4 (Goblet of Fire), after the series had become a worldwide phenomenon. Due to the Kremlin-like secrecy surrounding the books, all reviews since 2000 or so have been strictly shoot-from-the-hip. The reviewers themselves were often great—Ms. Kakutani ain’t exactly chapped liver—but the very popularity of the books has often undone even the best intentions of the best critical writers. In their hurry to churn out column inches, and thus remain members of good standing in the Church of What’s Happening Now, very few of the Potter reviewers have said anything worth remembering. Most of this microwaved critical mush sees Harry—not to mention his friends and his adventures—in only two ways: sociologically (“Harry Potter: Boon or Childhood Disease?”) or economically (“Harry Potter and the Chamber of Discount Pricing”). They take a perfunctory wave at things like plot and language, but do little more . . . and really, how can they? When you have only four days to read a 750-page book, then write an 1,100-word review on it, how much time do you have to really enjoy the book? To think about the book? Jo Rowling set out a sumptuous seven-course meal, carefully prepared, beautifully cooked, and lovingly served out. The kids and adults who fell in love with the series (I among them) savored every mouthful, from the appetizer (Sorcerer’s Stone) to the dessert (the gorgeous epilogue of Deathly Hallows). Most reviewers, on the other hand, bolted everything down, then obligingly puked it back up half-digested on the book pages of their respective newspapers.

And because of that, very few mainstream writers, from Salon to The New York Times, have really stopped to consider what Ms. Rowling has wrought, where it came from, or what it may mean for the future . . .

Conclusion. Because analytical essays so often begin with a question, interpreters frequently withhold the thesis statement (the answer) until the end—after they’ve given readers sufficient reasons to accept their conclusions as reasonable. You might also wrap up your analysis by contemplating the implications of your interpretation, raising a related question for readers to ponder (as Ali Bizzul does in her final draft; see p. 259), or speculating about the future, as Aida Akl does in her news analysis.
Demographic projections put the U.S. population at 400 million people by 2050. If current population trends continue, most analysts agree that America will be an ethnically different nation.

You can learn more about using your introduction and conclusion to frame the results of your analysis in Chapter 16.

**Organization.** The organization of your essay can also help frame your analysis, because it will affect the order in which you present your reasons and evidence. Your choice of organizing pattern should take into account your purposes and your readers’ needs and interests. For instance, if you are reporting the results of a trend analysis, you might want to use chronological order as your organizing pattern. If, in contrast, you are conducting a causal analysis, you might use the cause-and-effect organizing pattern. Creating an outline or a map (see p. 548) can also help you organize your thoughts, especially if your assignment calls for a relatively long essay, if you are combining interpretive frameworks, or if you expect to present a lot of reasons or evidence to support your interpretive claim. You can read more about organizing patterns and outlines in Chapter 16.

**Review and Improve Your Draft**

Creating the first draft of an analytical essay is a complex and rewarding process. In the course of learning about a subject, you’ve developed an interpretive question, chosen an interpretive framework, and conducted an analysis; you’ve made and supported an interpretive claim; and you’ve organized your reasons and evidence and framed your essay. Once you complete your first draft, you should step back and assess its strengths and weaknesses. A careful review—done individually and with the help of others—can help you pinpoint where you should invest time in improving your essay.

**ENSURE THAT YOUR CLAIM IS DEBATABLE**

If your interpretive claim is not debatable (see p. 250), it will do little to advance the conversation about your subject. As you review your essay, focus on your interpretive claim, and ask how your readers will react to it. For example, will your interpretive claim lead readers to disagree with you, or will it surprise or shock them? Will it make them think about the subject in a new way? Will it force them to reconsider their assumptions? If you think that your readers might respond by asking “so what?” you should take another look at your claim.

**CHALLENGE YOUR CONCLUSIONS**

As you review your essay, challenge your findings by considering alternative explanations and asking your own “so what?” questions. Your initial impressions of a subject will often benefit from additional reflection. Those impressions might be refined, or perhaps even changed substantially, through additional analysis. Or they might be reinforced, typically by locating additional evidence.
EXAMINE THE APPLICATION OF YOUR INTERPRETIVE FRAMEWORK
Ask whether you’ve applied your interpretive framework fairly and rigorously to your subject. If you are carrying out a causal analysis, for example, ask whether you’ve ruled out the possibility that the causal relationships you are exploring are simply correlations. If you’re conducting a text analysis, ask whether you’ve fully and fairly represented the text and whether you have considered alternative interpretations. Review how you’ve used your interpretive framework to make sure that you’ve applied it carefully and evenhandedly to your subject.

ASSESS YOUR ORGANIZATION
When readers can anticipate the sequence of reasoning and evidence that appears in your analytical essay, they’ll conclude that the essay is well organized. If an essay is confusing or difficult to follow, however, they’ll conclude that it is poorly written or,

Peer Review: Improve Your Analytical Essay

Writing an analytical essay requires a significant investment of time and effort. To ensure that this investment pays off, ask a friend or classmate to provide feedback on your draft by responding to the following questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>1. Is my interpretive claim clear and easy to understand? Is it debatable?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Have I offered a careful and thorough analysis to support my claim?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readers</td>
<td>3. Did the essay help you understand my subject in a new way? Why or why not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Does the analysis seem fair to you? Did you notice any cherry-picking? Can you think of any aspects of my subject that I neglected to consider?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources</td>
<td>5. Are the reasons I’ve offered for my interpretation coherent? Have I provided enough evidence to support each reason? Should I add or drop anything?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Do my sources strike you as reliable and appropriate? Does any of the evidence I’ve used seem questionable?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>7. Did I provide enough (or too much) information about my subject to ground the analysis?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Does the interpretive framework I’ve chosen seem like an appropriate choice for analyzing my subject? Would a different framework have been more effective?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For each of the points listed above, ask your reviewers to provide concrete advice about what you could do to improve your draft. It can help if you ask them to adopt the role of an editor — someone who is working with you to improve your draft. You can read more about working collaboratively in Chapter 4.

Download or print this Peer Review activity at bedfordstmartins.com/conversation.
worse, that the analysis is flawed. As you review your essay, ask whether your reasons and evidence seem easy to follow. If you find yourself growing puzzled as you try to read your essay, take another look at your choice of organizational pattern. Check, as well, whether your reasons are presented in an order that allows them to build on one another. If you have difficulty figuring out how you’ve organized your essay, consider creating a backward outline, an outline based on an already written draft. You can read more about organizing your essay and outlining in Chapter 16.

Once you’ve revised your essay, ask yourself how you might polish and edit your writing so that your readers will find your analysis easy to read. For a detailed discussion of polishing strategies, see Chapter 19. For an overview of editing strategies, see Chapter 20.

**Student Essay**

Ali Bizzul, “Living (and Dying) Large”

The following analytical essay was written by featured writer Ali Bizzul. You can follow Ali’s efforts to write her analytical essay by visiting bedfordstmartins.com/conversation. You can read excerpts of interviews in which she discusses her work on her analytical essay, read the assignment, and read drafts of her essay. Ali’s essay follows the requirements of the sixth edition of the *APA Publication Manual*. However, this edition does not include specific instructions for formatting student essays, so Ali’s essay has been formatted to fit typical requirements for undergraduate student writing. To see Ali’s essay formatted for an APA publication, please visit bedfordstmartins.com/conversation.
Living (and Dying) Large

Ali Bizzul

COCC150 College Composition

Professor Palmquist

September 20, 2009

Information about the writer, class, and submission date is provided on the cover page.
Bigger is better—or so says the adage that seems to drive much of American culture. From fast food to television sets to the “average” house, everything seems to be getting bigger. This is especially true for the athletes who play America’s favorite fall sport—football. Twelve- and thirteen-year-olds are bulking up so they can make their junior-high football teams. High school players are adding weight to earn college scholarships. And the best college players are pulling out all the stops in hopes of making an NFL team. All of this is occurring despite the belief of many football coaches that extra weight does little to enhance a football player’s performance—and might even derail it. Even worse, the drive to put on the pounds carries significant health risks for football players, both now and later in life. Despite what they believe, overweight players are less effective than their lighter peers—and at far greater risk of devastating harm.

While football requires both strength and speed, the media image of pro football players focuses mostly on their weight. NFL offensive linemen who weigh less than 300 pounds are often described as “undersized,” so it’s no surprise that young football players are getting the message that bigger is better—and bulking up. A recent study of high school linemen in Iowa showed that 45% were overweight and 9% were severely obese, while only 18% of other young males were overweight; even more troubling, a study in Michigan revealed that among football players from ages 9 to 14, 45% could be considered overweight or obese (as cited in Longman, 2007). Even those players who recognize that their size is unhealthy are reluctant to trim down. Consider Jeffery Espadron, a high school player who weighs 332 pounds: He is willing to lose some weight, but he refuses to go below 300 pounds because he sees NFL linemen weighing in at 290 to 300 pounds and believes he must do the same (Longman, 2007). As younger players like Espadron follow the footsteps of ever-bigger college and professional line-

The title is centered.
The writer frames the subject by calling attention to a common saying and then arguing that it does not apply to this case.
The essay's main point.
First reason supporting the analysis: a connection between the behavior of NFL players and players as young as 9 years of age.
Following APA style, information cited in a source is identified using the phrase "as cited in."
APA style uses author names and publication dates to identify sources.
men, they appear to believe that simply packing on the pounds will get them recognized by colleges and maybe even the NFL.

In order to add weight and muscle mass quickly, however, some football players go to dangerous extremes. Many have even turned to legal but unproven dietary supplements as a way of increasing muscle mass, and in some cases, the consequences have been fatal. Minnesota Viking Korey Stringer, a 335-pound offensive lineman who was believed to be taking a dietary supplement, died of heatstroke during a July 2001 training camp; four years later, San Francisco offensive tackle Thomas Herrion died of heart disease after a preseason game (Korth, 2006). Although such fatalities are unusual, a growing number of doctors believe that use of dietary supplements increases the risk of heatstroke among football players. In an editorial in the medical journal Neurosurgery, three sports-medicine specialists noted that after a 1994 federal law exempted dietary supplements from regulation by the Food and Drug Administration, heat-related injuries among football players began to rise (Bailes, Cantu, & Day, 2002). They further argued that the increase appears to be related to the use of supplements such as ephedrine and creatine monohydrate (Bailes et al., 2002). Marketed as an energy booster and body builder, ephedrine has an effect similar to amphetamine: It can increase core body temperatures and decrease the body’s ability to cool itself. Creatine monohydrate, which is marketed as a muscle builder, can shift body water from the bloodstream into muscle cells, increasing the likelihood of heatstroke. Bailes et al. (2002) noted that, despite such health risks, “the use of nutritional supplements [among football players] seems to be the rule rather than the exception” (p. 287). Many young football players today seem willing to overlook the potential harm in these supplements in the hope of gaining a small advantage on the field.

Heatstroke is not the only danger associated with increased size. Excess weight can cause serious health problems, even if some of the pounds are due to high muscle mass. According to Harp and Hecht (2005), two researchers at
the University of North Carolina who conducted a study of 2,168 professional football players competing in the 2003–2004 season, 97% of NFL players would be considered “overweight” and 56% “obese” under the Body Mass Index (BMI) guidelines published by the National Institutes of Health for men in their twenties (see Fig. 1). The researchers noted that the group of football players with the highest rates of obesity—the linemen—also had higher blood pressure readings and higher incidences of sleep-disordered breathing than any other group of football players. It appears that athletes are not immune to the effects of obesity, in spite of their active lifestyles.

In addition, a player’s large body mass may cause other serious health problems that aren’t clear until years later. Added weight can be difficult to lose, and later in life, it can complicate the health of ex-athletes. Sports reporters Korth (2006) and Longman (2007) described studies establishing that diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, high cholesterol, joint damage, and sleep apnea are common among those who are overweight, even current or former athletes. As Dr. Tim Kremcheck, a team physician for several high schools in the Cincinnati area, has warned, for overweight players,

the issue is [that] they’re not only hurting themselves for the short term, but [that] the long term effects are horrible. They’re going to have arthritic problems in their joints. They’ll need operations for their carti-

![Summarized image of a relevant study](image1)

![Reference to a figure is provided in the text.](image2)

![The figure is wrapped by text and located near its reference in the text.](image3)

![The credentials of an expert cited in a source are provided.](image4)

![A block quotation is used to present a longer quotation.](image5)
Living (and Dying) Large 5

large. They’ll have herniated discs in their lower backs, they’ll have more knee injuries, ankle injuries, hamstrings. . . . (as cited in Groeschen, 2008)

As dire as Kremer’s warnings sound, these effects are already evident in recently retired NFL players. Barry Pettyjohn, a high school coach and former NFL offensive lineman, increased his weight from 250 pounds to 280 for college, and again to 300 at the beginning of his NFL career; after he stopped playing, his weight ballooned to 375 pounds, and he has had 14 operations on his shoulders, knees, and elbows (Groeschen, 2008). While injuries on the field are often unavoidable, these kinds of self-inflicted injuries are not. It’s up to the players themselves to make sure they don’t cause their bodies any unnecessary, lasting harm by packing on weight.

When professional football players believe that bigger is better despite evidence to the contrary, it is not surprising that athletes as young as twelve and thirteen are trying to become as big as they can as quickly as they can. Most coaches agree that it is skill and not weight that impresses the scouts, but their message is ignored. Their advice to slim down and focus on technique doesn’t seem to change the minds of young players, nor do reports of the deaths of college and professional athletes. Instead, the desire to outweigh opponents overshadows everything else. Former Buccaneers lineman Brad Culpepper, for instance, described what went through his mind during routine stops for fast food late at night:

It was gross, but [packing in calories] was the way to keep the weight on. In the back of my mind I thought, “I shouldn’t be doing this; it’s not healthy.” But then the other side says, “Hey, you have to do what you have to do.” (as cited in Korth, 2006)

In some sense, comments like these may be an example of players thinking that they are invincible. However, for many young players dreaming of a pro football career, this kind of thinking is both harmful and counterproductive.
Living (and Dying) Large 6

Health issues aside, many football players might be surprised to learn that bigger players aren’t necessarily better. The widespread assumption is that larger football players—particularly those playing the line—are more effective than smaller players. Jeffery Espadron, for example, has noticed that college recruiters value bigger players, and he believes that “they’re going to notice me because of my size” (as cited in Longman, 2007, para. 32). Most coaches, however, disagree with that assumption and insist that bulk is a liability. As high school football coach Mickey Joseph commented, “The bigger they are, the worse they are. They can’t move. They can’t get out of their stance. They’re out of breath” (as cited in Longman, 2007, para. 25). Perhaps this observation should be shared with more professional players as well. In their study of NFL players, Harp and Hecht (2005) found no correlation between higher BMIs and the ranking of NFL teams. In fact, the team with the highest average BMI, the Arizona Cardinals, finished last in the National Football Conference in the 2003–2004 season. Players who deliberately bulk up often sacrifice speed and agility for sheer size, a strategy that does not always pay off when they’re on the field.

Given the potential dangers to their health and the fact that being large does little to make them effective players, why do athletes work so hard to get bigger? Perhaps they think the statistics won’t apply to them personally—that adding pounds will improve their individual performance. Athletes also know that gaining weight is much easier than gaining muscle, and if weight gives players the slightest advantage, they may think the risks are worth it. Do these players love their sport so much that they will continue to sacrifice their health—or even their lives—for it? They may, if they remain unaware of the consequences, and if they push themselves to their limits without fully understanding the risks.
References


Project Ideas

The following suggestions can help you focus your work on an analytical essay or another type of analytical document.

Suggestions for Essays

1. **ANALYZE AN ACADEMIC TRENDS**

   Identify a trend in a field of study that interests you. For instance, you might have noticed the increasing use of statistical methods and advanced mathematics in biology courses, a decreasing emphasis on politics and great leaders in history courses, or a new focus on ethics in business courses. Confirm that the trend exists, and then
analyze its implications for students in the discipline. To support your analysis, consult scholarly journals, survey instructors in the field, or interview students who are majoring in the field.

2. SPECULATE ABOUT A POPULAR TRENDS
Write an essay that explores a popular trend, such as the rise in popularity of a particular kind of music or growing interest in a particular area of study. Address your essay to your instructor. In your essay, describe the trend and provide evidence that shows how it has developed over time. To support your analysis, draw on written sources, or conduct field research using interviews, observations, or surveys.

3. TRACE THE CAUSES OF A RECENT EVENT
Interpret a recent event for an audience of your choice, such as your classmates, other college students, your instructor, your parents, or members of the community. The event might be a local ballot initiative, a natural disaster affecting your region, an incident involving law enforcement officers and college students, or anything you’ve read about in the news that intrigues or worries you. In your essay, describe the event and provide an analysis of its possible causes. Draw on written sources, interviews, or observations to support your analysis.

4. ASSESS THE EFFECTS OF A HISTORICAL EVENT
Analyze the long-term consequences of a historical event for an audience of your choice. You might direct your essay to your instructor, your classmates, other college students, your friends, or people working in a particular profession. Choose a historical event that has implications for your audience. For example, if you are writing for people from your hometown, you might choose to write about something that occurred when the town was founded. If you are writing for your instructor or classmates, you might choose something related to education, such as the passage of Title IX, which banned discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs that receive federal funding, or the Morrill Act, which established public land-grant universities. In your essay, describe the event clearly, identify the sources you used to learn about it, and discuss the implications of the event for your readers.

5. ANALYZE AN ADVERTISEMENT
Write an essay that uses text analysis to interpret an advertisement. Address your essay to your instructor. Choose an ad that interests you, and develop an interpretive question to guide your analysis. For example, you might ask how ads for a credit card company attempt to elicit a positive response from readers, or you might ask how an ad for a popular brand of beer distinguishes the beer from its competitors. If possible, include part or all of the ad as an illustration in your essay. To support your analysis,
draw on written sources, or conduct field research using interviews, observations, or surveys.

**Suggestions for Other Genres**

**6. DRAFT AND DESIGN A COLUMN FOR A MAGAZINE**
First decide whether you want to write about a particular subject or submit your column to a particular magazine. If you have a specific subject in mind, search your library’s databases and the Web for articles that address it. This can help you identify magazines that might be interested in your column. If you want to publish your column in a particular magazine, read two or three issues cover-to-cover to determine the kinds of subjects it normally addresses. Once you’ve selected a target magazine, analyze it to determine its writing conventions (such as the level of formality and the manner in which sources are acknowledged) and design conventions. As you learn about your subject and plan, organize, and design your column, keep in mind what you’ve learned about the columns you’ve read. Your column should reflect those writing and design conventions.

**7. CREATE A NEWS ANALYSIS**
Begin working on your news analysis by identifying an event to analyze. Consider whether analyzing this event will help you accomplish your purposes as a writer. Then reflect on whether your readers will want or need to know about the event. Finally, identify the newspaper, magazine, or Web site where you’d like to publish your news analysis. Once you’ve made these preliminary decisions, learn more about the event by consulting your library’s databases. Use what you learn about the event to plan, organize, and design your news analysis. Be sure to seek feedback on your drafts from other writers (friends, classmates, relatives) and from your instructor.

**8. DEVELOP A MULTIMEDIA PRESENTATION**
Begin working on your presentation by considering your purpose and your audience. After you’ve chosen a subject and conducted your analysis, identify the overall point you want to convey; choose the reasons you’ll use to convince your readers to accept your analysis; and identify the evidence you’ll use to support your reasons. Then consider the setting in which your audience will view your presentation, choose an organization for your points, and select an appealing and consistent design for your slides. Remember that an effective slide usually focuses on a single point and provides a limited amount of information to support that point. As you develop your presentation, ask for feedback from friends, classmates, instructors, or relatives.
9. ANALYZE A POEM, SHORT STORY, OR NOVEL
Analyze a poem, short story, or novel that you’ve read recently. Address your analysis to your instructor and other readers who share your interest in this work of literature. Focus on a clearly stated interpretive question and use text analysis as your interpretive framework. Support your analysis by drawing on the work of literature and published reviews or journal articles. In your essay, identify and briefly describe the work you’re analyzing. Then offer your interpretation of the work.

10. POST A BLOG ENTRY
Identify a subject that is suitable for analysis and likely to interest a general group of readers. Then create a blog entry that analyzes the subject. As you write your entry, consider the possibilities and limitations associated with writing for the Web, and in particular for a blog. In your blog entry, provide enough background information on your subject to ground your analysis, introduce your interpretive question, and present your analysis. You should support your analysis by drawing on the subject and linking to other documents on the Web.

In Summary: Writing an Analytical Essay

- **Find a conversation and listen in**
  - Explore your surroundings (p. 234).
  - Ask interpretive questions (p. 235).
  - Search databases (p. 237).

- **Conduct your analysis.**
  - Refine your question (p. 239).
  - Seek a fuller understanding of your subject (p. 240).
  - Apply an interpretive framework (p. 242).

- **Prepare a draft.**
  - Make an interpretive claim (p. 250).
  - Explain your interpretation (p. 251).
  - Consider genre and design (p. 254).
  - Frame your analysis (p. 256).

- **Review and improve your draft.**
  - Ensure that your claim is debatable (p. 257).
  - Challenge your conclusions (p. 257).
  - Examine the application of your interpretive framework (p. 258).
  - Assess your organization (p. 258).