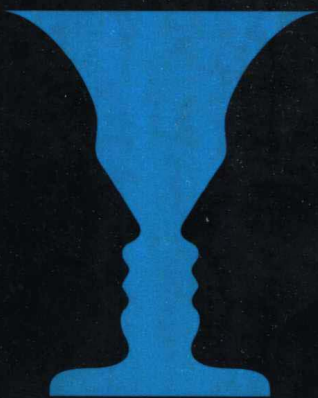


# DEVELOPING ARGUMENTS

Strategies for Reaching Audiences

Kathleen Bell



# ***Developing Arguments***

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STRATEGIES FOR REACHING AUDIENCES

KATHLEEN BELL  
OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

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## Preface

**W**hen the artist Renoir reached the age of ninety, his arthritis was so severe that his paintbrush had to be strapped to his hand. Asked how he could paint in such an awkward and painful state, Renoir replied, "But I don't paint with my hand."

Writers and teachers of writing have come to realize the significance of Renoir's words: Effective writing is built on effective thinking—a recursive process of discovering choices, making decisions, and evaluating choices made. This book guides students in using this critical thinking and writing process in developing effective arguments.

Any book on how to write poses a conceptual problem: Writing is an interactive process, but only one feature can be discussed at a time. With that problem in mind, I used three levels of organization for this text: the stages of writing, a whole-to-parts rhetoric, and critical thinking strategies. This organization will help students focus simultaneously on the *what* of their purpose for writing, the *how* of developing their writing, and the *why* of making and evaluating their decisions. Structurally these emphases are interwoven in the following ways.

### STAGES OF WRITING

Each part of the text represents a different stage of the composing process: discovering, investigating, planning, writing, and evaluating. While these stages progress in a natural order from generating ideas and collecting information to shaping and refining ideas, writing full essays is *not* delayed until the fourth stage. The exercises in each chapter include all stages of the composing process.

In their broadest sense the stages are meant to serve as reference points for students as they compose arguments in or out of class. The ongoing nature of the writing stages means they will allow flexibility in instruction; the methods used here can be adapted to the needs of individual students.

## WHOLE-TO-PARTS RHETORIC

The chapter titles within each part identify rhetorical concerns. This emphasis leads students from what they already know to what they determine they need to know. From there, students learn to analyze what their audiences know, what they need to know, and how they will best understand the argument. This strategy assumes that once students have an overall sense of purpose for their writing—once they can define the context and the direction of the claim—they will be more strongly motivated to investigate their assumptions and take the risk of experimenting with ways to share those beliefs. In advocating this assumption, the text focuses in every chapter on the relationship between the writer and the audience so that students will write *real* arguments for *real* audiences.

## CRITICAL THINKING LEVELS

The presentation of the material within each chapter follows the hierarchy of the critical thinking strategies. The rhetorical principles—the focus of each chapter—are introduced at the discovery level using heuristics and often diagrams to assist students in visualizing the range of available choices. From that point the actual decision-making process is illustrated with varied examples that require choosing among several alternatives. Students find that they cannot apply formulas in making decisions. An array of audiences and contexts expands students' understanding of why and how choices are made and prepares them for the next level of critical thinking, evaluating the choices they make. Arguments are evaluated in each chapter, each of which focuses on one principle but builds on all principles presented in previous chapters. The evaluations are designed to emphasize how the choices made and the effects of those choices are unique to the context of the argument being evaluated. This organizational level strives to reinforce the value of choosing and of making effective and responsible decisions rather than following prescribed formats.

Combined, these three organizational designs put students at the center of the decision-making process, a process that can be used beyond the writing class in making responsible judgments on what they hear or read, as well as on what they present to others. Argument, then, becomes an individualized means of seeing and shaping ideas for oneself and generating structures for sharing those ideas as beliefs. The dialogue that emanates from this relationship between writer and reader requires the critical inquiry and reasoning this book hopes to provide.

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*Kathleen Bell*

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