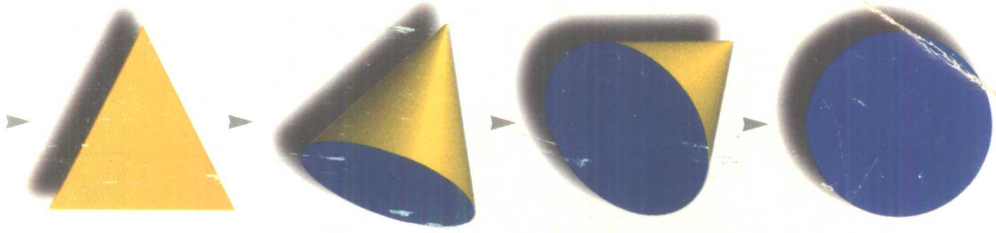
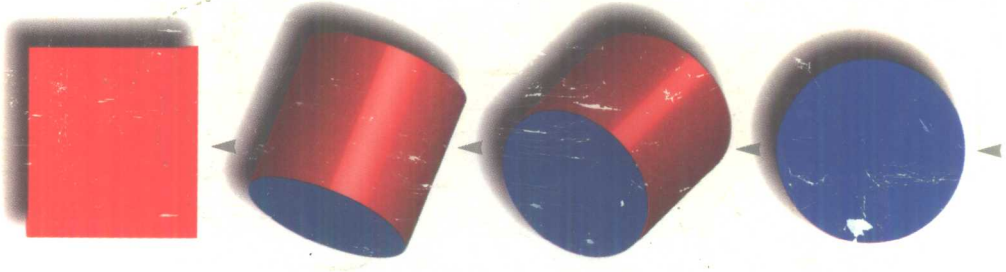
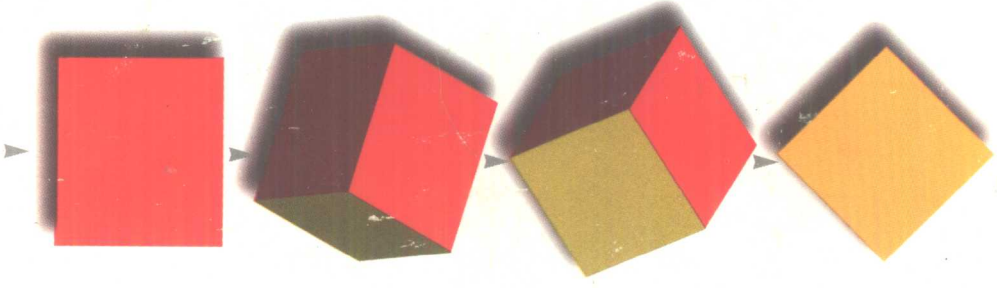
ROBERT K. MILLER



THE INFORMED ARGUMENT



A MULTIDISCIPLINARY READER AND GUIDE



FOURTH EDITION

THE INFORMED ARGUMENT

A MULTIDISCIPLINARY READER AND GUIDE

FOURTH EDITION

ROBERT K. MILLER

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PREFACE FOR STUDENTS

This book has been designed to help you argue on behalf of your beliefs so that other people will take them seriously. Part 1 introduces you to basic principles of argumentation that you need to analyze the arguments you read and to compose arguments of your own. Part 2 introduces you to specific strategies for evaluating your reading and to formal conventions for supporting arguments with information that you have acquired through that reading.

The readings gathered for you in *The Informed Argument,* Fourth Edition, will give you adequate information for writing about a variety of topics. The readings that form the heart of the book are found in Part 3, "Sources for Argument." In this part of the book, you will find material on the same subject by several different writers. I hope that your reading in Part 3 will leave you better informed about the different subjects that are discussed. But whatever you learn about these subjects is a bonus. The purpose of *The Informed Argument* is not to turn you into an expert on gun control, sexual harassment, or curriculum reform; it is to help you master skills that you can apply to subjects of your own choice long after you have completed the course in which you used this book.

In choosing the various essays for Part 3, I attempted to give equal consideration to opposing viewpoints so that you can better understand different sides of the issues in question. I also included examples of different writing strategies. To fulfill these goals, I did not limit the selections to the most recent works available. You will find the date of original publication within the introductory note that comes immediately before each selection. When evaluating sources, recognize that an essay can embody a strong argument or interesting point of view many years after it was written. An old essay can include outdated information, however, so you should consider the date of each source when deciding the extent to which you can rely upon it.

If you read carefully, you will find that almost every written argument includes a point that can be questioned. This is because argument is part of an ongoing process of inquiry; a single argument is unlikely to entirely resolve any complex issue. So don't feel that an argument loses all credibility because you have discovered a flaw in it. Although you should be alert for flaws, especially in reasoning, you should consider the flaw in proportion to the argument as a whole. Some writers undermine their entire argument by contradicting themselves or by making wild charges; others are able to make a strong argument despite one or two weak points. Whatever the case, we as readers and writers learn from considering many points of view and deciding how they inform each other. Argument is not about "winning" or "losing"; it is a process

devoted to finding solutions to problems. When this process is undertaken honestly, everyone stands to benefit.

I wrote this book because I saw that students often needed additional information before they could write well-supported arguments but did not always have the time to do research. Some writers, however, enjoy doing their own research, and you may want to supplement your reading in this book with material that you have discovered on your own. Part 5, "A Guide to Research," discusses how to find sources in a library. Searching for your own sources will enable you to include recently published material within your arguments. Library research may also help you discover unusual or surprising information, which will make your arguments more interesting to readers who are already familiar with the material in *The Informed Argument*. The extent to which you decide to go outside the book, if at all, is something to be decided in consultation with your instructor. The book itself has been designed to make research an option rather than a necessity.

This edition includes 13 essays written by students. These have been included to enable you to see how other students have satisfied assignments similar to those you may be asked to undertake. These essays are intended to help you rather than to impress you. Try to learn what you can from them, but do not feel that they represent some sort of perfection that is beyond your grasp. All of the student writers are serious enough about writing that they will probably see things they'd like to change as soon as they see their essays in print, for revision is a never-ending commitment essential to good writing. I want to thank these students for giving me permission to publish their work and remind them that I hope they keep on writing. I also want to thank the many students who studied the first three editions of this book and helped me to see how it could be improved.

PREFACE FOR INSTRUCTORS

The Fourth Edition of *The Informed Argument* continues to reflect my belief that learning is best fostered by encouraging students to read, reflect, and write about serious issues. Most of the readings are once again assembled into the equivalent of separate casebooks, six of which focus on important issues of the sort students often want to write about but lack adequate information to do so effectively. Instructors are free to treat each section either as a self-contained unit or as a springboard to further reading. To facilitate class discussion, every essay has its own editorial apparatus. This allows for much flexibility. Readings can be assigned in whatever sequence seems appropriate for a particular class. And there is plenty of material, so you can vary the assignments you give to different classes without undertaking the work of an entirely new preparation.

Of 85 selections, 60 are new to this edition. They are drawn from a variety of disciplines to help students master different types of writing and reading. Among the fields represented are biology, business, education, history, journalism, law, literature, political science, psychology, public health, and sociology. In selecting these readings, I have been guided by three primary concerns: (1) to give students information for writing arguments of their own, (2) to expose them to different points of view, (3) to provide them with model arguments. I have also chosen pieces that require different degrees of experience with reading. Some of the pieces—especially in the early sections—are easily accessible; others are more demanding. My goal was to give students an immediate point of entry into the issues and then encourage them to confront more difficult texts representative of the reading they will be expected to undertake on their own in college and beyond.

Although I believe in the importance of writing across the curriculum, I also believe that literature should be part of the curriculum being written across. Consequently, the book includes a section on literary criticism as a type of argumentation. The thematically organized sections in Part 3 are followed by Part 4, "Some Classic Arguments." This section increases the variety of readings made available to students through inclusion of such well-known essays as "A Modest Proposal" and "Letter from Birmingham Jail" as well as seldom-anthologized arguments by writers such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Margaret Sanger, and Mahatma Gandhi.

The wish to increase diversity within the book led me to include significantly more pieces by women and writers of color and to address such timely concerns as sexual harassment and immigration reform. Argument has been perceived too often as a male-dominated discourse devoted to attacking

opponents and winning some kind of victory. *The Informed Argument* demonstrates that argument takes many different forms, that it is often ameliorative rather than combative, and that it is practiced by writers who differ in terms of gender, race, class, and sexual orientation.

Because books have become so expensive, I have designed *The Informed Argument* to satisfy the needs of students in a semester-long class and to be useful to them long afterward. Part 1 introduces students to the principles they need to understand for reading and writing arguments. I have kept the explanations as simple as possible. Examples are provided for each of the concepts discussed, and student essays illustrate both inductive and deductive reasoning as well as the model for reasoning devised by Stephen Toulmin. In addition, two versions of the same student essay illustrate the importance of revision, and another student essay illustrates strategies for definition. A feature new to this edition is that Parts 1 and 2 now include exercises with which students can put principles into practice immediately after they have been introduced.

Part 2 discusses the evaluation, annotation, paraphrase, summary, synthesis, and documentation of texts. For easy reference, a gray border identifies the pages devoted to documentation. The major documentation styles in use across the curriculum are illustrated—not only those of the Modern Language Association (MLA) and the American Psychological Association (APA), which are discussed in detail, but also the use of documentary footnotes and a numbered system favored in scientific writing. MLA style is also illustrated by several student essays in Part 3 and by a longer paper in Part 5. To help students using APA-style documentation, original publication dates are printed within the headnotes for selections in Parts 3 and 4. Examples of APA and other styles are provided by one or more of the essays in Part 3.

Several of the suggestions for writing in Parts 3 and 4 encourage students to do library research. How to do so is discussed in Part 5, "A Guide to Research." In keeping with the book's multidisciplinary character, I illustrate a search strategy that could be employed to locate material for many different courses. Although this information appears at the end of the book, it can be taught at any time. Rather than suggesting that research is limited to an academic exercise called "the research paper," *The Informed Argument* is designed to show that research can take many forms and, as Richard Larson has argued, "almost any paper is potentially a paper incorporating the fruits of research."

Instructors new to *The Informed Argument* might also note that the book contains a total of 13 student essays. Although student essays can be found in many textbooks, *The Informed Argument* includes essays that respond to sources that are reprinted in the book. I have included these essays because students often profit from studying the work of other students. Given the difficulty of arguing effectively and using sources responsibly, students using the Fourth Edition should welcome the chance to see how other students coped with assignments similar to their own.

In completing this edition, I have contracted many debts. I want to thank my colleagues at the University of St. Thomas for creating an atmosphere in which it is a pleasure to work. Mary Rose O'Reilley, Lon Otto, and

Joan Piorkowski deserve special thanks for their unfailing encouragement and support. I also want to thank the students with whom I've worked this year, especially Alicia Fedorczak, Christopher Lovrien, Erik Miles, Douglas Micko, Jessica Powell, and Andrew Shimek who all contributed essays to this edition.

For helpful advice in planning the Fourth Edition, I want to thank the following:

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CONTENTS

AN INTRODUCTION TO ARGUMENT

Argument is a means of fulfilling desire. That desire may be for something as abstract as truth or as concrete as an increase in salary. When you ask for an extension on a paper, apply for a job, propose a marriage, or recommend any change that involves someone besides yourself, you are putting yourself in a position that requires effective argumentation. You may also have occasion to argue seriously about political and ethical concerns. Someone you love may be considering an abortion, a large corporation may try to buy its chemical waste on property that adjoins your own, or you may be suddenly deprived of a benefit to which you feel entitled. By learning how to organize your beliefs and support them with information that will make other people take them seriously, you will be mastering one of the most important skills you are likely to learn in college.

Working your arguments out on paper gives you an opportunity to make changes as often as you want until you are satisfied that your words do what you want them to do. This is an important benefit because constructing effective arguments requires that you think clearly without letting your feelings dominate what you say, and this can be difficult at times. But it can also be tremendously satisfying when you succeed in making other people understand what you mean. You may not always convert others to your point of view, but you can earn their respect. This, in a way, is what argument is all about. When you argue for what you believe, you are asking others to believe in you. This means that you must prove to your audience that you are worth listening to. Instead of thinking in terms of "winning" or "losing" an argument, consider argumentation as an intellectual effort designed to solve problems by drawing people together.

Bearing this in mind, you should always be careful to treat both your audience and your opponents with respect. Few people are likely to be converted to your view if you treat them as if they are fools or dismiss their beliefs

with contempt. Reason is the essence of effective argumentation, and an important part of being reasonable is demonstrating that you have given consideration to beliefs that are different from your own and have recognized what makes them appealing. Try not to be narrow-minded or overly opinionated.

The readings that form the heart of this book were chosen to make you better informed on a number of important questions so that you can argue about them more effectively. After you have read six or seven essays on the same subject, you should be able to compose an argument that shows you have considered the various views you have encountered. But remember that being "better informed" does not always mean being "well informed." Well-educated men and women recognize how little they know in proportion to how much there is to be known. Don't suppose that you've become an expert on immigration policy just because you have spent a week or two reading about it. What you read should influence what you think, but, as you read more, remember that controversial subjects are controversial because there is so much that can be said about them—much more than you may have realized at first.

CHOOSING A TOPIC

Almost anything *can* be argued, but not everything *should* be argued. You won't be taken seriously if you seem to argue indiscriminately. Argument should be the result of reflection, not reflex, and argumentation is a skill that should be practiced selectively.

When choosing a topic for a written argument, you should avoid questions that can be easily settled by referring to an authority, such as a dictionary or an encyclopedia. There is no point in arguing about how to spell "separate" or about what city is the capital of Australia: there is only one correct answer. Choose a topic that can inspire a variety of answers, any one of which can be "correct" to some degree. Your challenge is to define and support a position in which you believe even though other people do not yet share your belief.

Almost all intelligent arguments involve *opinions,* but not all opinions lead to good written arguments. There is no reason to argue an opinion with which almost no one would disagree. An essay designed to "prove" that puppies are cute or that vacations can be fun is unlikely to generate much excitement. Don't belabor the obvious. Choose a topic that is likely to inspire at least some controversy, but don't feel that you suddenly need to acquire strange and eccentric opinions.

Be careful to distinguish between opinions that are a matter of taste and those that are a question of judgment. Some people like broccoli, and some people don't. You may be the world's foremost broccoli lover, but no matter how hard you try, you will not convince someone who hates green vegetables to head quickly to the produce department of the nearest supermarket. A gifted stylist, writing in the manner of Charles Lamb or E. B. White, could probably compose an amusing essay on broccoli that would be a delight to

read. But it is one thing to describe our tastes and quite another to insist that others share them. We all have firmly entrenched likes and dislikes. Persuasion in matters of taste is usually beyond the reach of what can be accomplished through the written word—unless you happen to command the resources of an unusually effective advertising agency.

Taste is a matter of personal preference. Whether we prefer green to blue or daffodils to tulips is unlikely to affect anyone but ourselves. Questions of judgment are more substantial than matters of taste because judgment cannot be divorced from logic. Our judgments are determined by our beliefs, behind which are basic principles to which we try to remain consistent. These principles ultimately lead us to decide that some judgments are correct and others are not, so judgment has greater implications than taste. Should a university require freshmen to live in dormitories? Should men and women live together before getting married? Should parents spank their children? All these are questions of judgment.

In written argumentation, questions of judgment provide the best subjects. Because they are complex, they offer more avenues to explore. This does not mean that you must cover every aspect of a question in a single essay. Good subjects have many possibilities, and the essays that are written on them will take many different directions. If you try to explore too many directions at once, you might easily get lost—or lose your readers along the way.

When planning your written argument, you may benefit from distinguishing between a *subject* and a *topic:* A topic is part of a subject. For example, "gun control" is a subject from which many different topics can be derived. Possibilities include: state laws affecting handguns, federal laws on the possession of military weapons, the constitutional right to "keep and bear arms," and gun use in crime. Each of these topics could be narrowed further. Someone interested in gun use in crime might focus on the extent to which criminals benefit from easy access to guns or on whether owning a gun serves as a deterrent to crime. Because it is easier to do justice to a well-focused topic than to a broad subject, choosing a topic is one of the most important choices writers need to make.

Some writers successfully define their topics before they begin to write. Others begin to write on one topic and then discover that they are more interested in a different topic, which may or may not be related. Still other writers use specific writing techniques for generating topics. At times, you will be required to write on a topic that has been assigned to you. But whenever you have freedom to choose your own topic, remember that writing may help you to discover what you want to write about. *Freewriting*—writing nonstop for five to ten minutes without worrying about grammar, spelling, style, organization, or repetition—often leads writers to discover that they have more ideas than they had realized. Similarly, *brainstorming*—listing as many aspects about a subject or a topic as come to mind during ten minutes or so—can help to focus an essay and to identify several essential points. In short, you do not need to choose your topic before you can even begin writing, but you should choose and develop a clearly defined topic before you submit an essay for evaluation.

Whether you choose a topic before you begin to write or use writing to discover a topic, ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I know exactly what my topic is?
- Is this topic suitable for the length of the work I am planning to write?
- Do I have an opinion about this topic?
- Would anyone disagree with my opinion?
- Can I hope to persuade others to agree with my opinion?
- Can I support my opinion with evidence?

If you answer "yes" to all of these questions, you can proceed with confidence.

Exercise 1

Robert L. Rose is a staff writer for *The Wall Street Journal,* which published the following news story on February 6, 1990. After you have read it, frame at least three separate questions about the issue discussed in this piece. Then ask yourself if any of your questions are questions of judgment. Identify the question that could best lead to a written argument.

ROBERT L. ROSE

IS SAVING LEGAL?

A penny saved is a penny earned. Usually. 1

Take the case of Grace Capetillo, a 36-year-old single mother with a true talent for parsimony. To save on clothing, Ms. Capetillo dresses herself plainly in thrift-store finds. To cut her grocery bill, she stocks up on 67-cent boxes of saltines and 39-cent cans of chicken soup. 2

When Ms. Capetillo's five-year-old daughter, Michelle, asked for "Li'l Miss Makeup" for Christmas, her mother bypassed Toys "R" Us, where the doll retails for $19.99. Instead, she found one at Goodwill—for $1.89. She cleaned it up and tied a pink ribbon in its hair before giving the doll to Michelle. Ms. Capetillo found the popular Mr. Potato Head at Goodwill, too, assembling the plastic toy one piece at a time from the used toy bin. It cost her 79 cents, and saved $3.18. 3

Whose Money?

Ms. Capetillo's stingy strategies helped her build a savings account of more than $3,000 in the last four years. Her goal was to put away enough to buy a new washing machine and maybe one day help send Michelle to college. To 4