

The Composition of Everyday Life



A Guide to Writing

John Mauk • John Metz

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Publisher: Michael Rosenberg
Acquisitions Editor: Dickson Musslewhite
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Senior Production Editor: Esther Marshall
Editorial Assistant: Stephen Marsi
Marketing Director: Lisa Kimball

Manufacturing Manager: Marcia Locke
Compositor/Project Management: Pre-Press Company, Inc.
Photo Researcher Manager: Sheri Blaney
Cover/Text Designer: Will Tenney, Perspectives
Cover Photo: ©Karen Moskowitz/GETTY IMAGES
Printer: QuebecorWorld

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Printed in the United States of America.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 08 07 06 05 04 03

For more information contact Wadsworth, 25 Thomson Place, Boston, Massachusetts 02210 USA, or you can visit our Internet site at <http://www.wadsworth.com>

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ISBN: 0-15-504307-2 (InfoTrac® College Edition)

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Mauk, John

The composition of everyday life: a guide to writing/ John Mauk, John Metz.

p. cm.

Includes index.

1. English language--Rhetoric--Handbooks, manuals, etc. 2. Manners and customs--Problems, exercises, etc. 3. Report writing--Handbooks, manuals, etc. 4. Readers--Manners and customs. 5. College readers. I. Metz, John (John W.) II. Title.

PE1408.M3869 2003
808'.042--dc21

2003049999

Acknowledgments

The *Composition of Everyday Life* embodies a widely held belief in composition studies: that any piece of writing grows out of a large context of voices. Over the past three years, during the invention, revision, development, revision, writing, and revision of the text, a number of important writers, thinkers, teachers and students informed our decisions. Particularly, we are thankful to:

Steve Mockensturm at Studio Vent, not only for originating the book's layout and the cover design but also for teaching us how to think visually; Michael Morgan at Bemidji State University for insights and Web site contributions; our colleagues (and comrades) at Owens Community College, who talked openly with us about their pedagogy and contributed their writing and energy to the project; our colleagues at The University of Toledo and Northwestern Michigan College, who have been a source of energy; Alice Calderonello, Patricia Harkin, and Joan Mullin for a deeper understanding of composition and for hints on being writers.

We are deeply indebted to our development editor, Julie McBurney, whose consistent wisdom brought us from the inception of this project to its final chapter. Thanks also to Dickson Musslewhite for his constant advocacy, to Esther Marshall for ably shepherding the book through the production process, and to all the energetic and visionary folks at Wadsworth, as well as all the freelancers and in particular: Janet McCartney; Pre-Press Company: Elsa van Bergen, Katy Faria, and Christopher Forestieri; Peggy Hines and Patrice Titterington. Bravo. Finally, thanks to the reviewers, whose opinions added layers and dimensions to our work:

Cathryn Amdahl, *Harrisburg Area Community College*
Sheila Booth, *Quinsigamond Community College*
Jennifer Brezina, *College of the Canyons*
Rebecca L. Busker, *Arizona State University*
Maria Clayton, *Middle Tennessee State University*
Chidsey Dickson, *Christopher Newport University*
Michael Donnelly, *Temple University*
Jhon Gilroy, *Albuquerque Technical Vocational Institute*
Greg Glau, *Arizona State University*
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Michael Morgan, *Bemidji State University*
Maureen Placilla, *Finger Lakes Community College*
Diane Orsini, *Valencia Community College*
Michael Roos, *University of Cincinnati*
Lisa Schneider, *Columbus State Community College*
Lou Thomson, *Texas Women's University*

A Note to Instructors

This text emerged out of our own pedagogical crises. After years of teaching at two-year and four-year colleges, we realized that our students were having the most difficulty with invention—the act of generating ideas. For many of our students, especially novice and apprehensive writers, invention meant grabbing onto the first topic that felt comfortable (that would most likely generate several pages), and these topics (such as abortion, capital punishment, legalization of marijuana, etc.), most often did not propel students into vital intellectual space. Generally, we discovered that students become bored by their own topic choices, and instructors become frustrated at the lack of invention.

So after a collective 32 years of teaching college composition courses, we found ourselves asking a basic question: *how does one teach invention?* For many years, invention has been wrapped in vague terms for students. Writing tricks such as webbing, brainstorming, and the like have been offered to students as tools for generating ideas. Beyond those tools, which imply that invention is merely a lucky accident of the synapses, we were wondering how to teach *inventive perspectives*—to help students see their lives and the world around them as realms of possibilities and to re-see the familiar aspects of everyday life.

We also thought about the changing student demographics in higher education. At the universities and community colleges where we have taught, the student body has included the traditional 18-20-year-olds who leave behind hometowns to reside within collegiate space. But we have also seen the steady rise of 20-, 30-, 40-somethings, with jobs and families, looking for an additional layer in their lives. And our experience is not unique. Increasingly, college students are less apt to leave behind familiar lives and steep themselves in school. They are increasingly more apt to attend school part-time, hold jobs (sometimes more than one), and have children. And even the students attending four-year residential campuses are increasingly more likely to read, study, and carry on everyday life off-campus.

Because students are spending less time on campus, less time in traditional academic space, they need a pedagogy they can carry with them into everyday life, one that actually depends on and uses everyday life beyond the classroom. To address these needs, each chapter in *Composition of Everyday Life* prompts students through a rigorous invention process, which begins in life beyond the classroom and goes beyond the actual assignment itself. In other words, each chapter casts the *invention process* as a broader, more expansive and encompassing, process than the actual act of writing. Each chapter promotes consistent inquiry, so that the student writer does not leave invention behind at the drafting/writing phase, but continues to re-write, and be re-written by, increasingly complex ideas. In other words, as the chapters proceed, they call students further into their own topics. Even when they are considering voice or organization or revision, students are prompted to create by inquiring—by looking at the gaps in their own texts and their own understanding. *CEL*, then, does not simply teach students how to write, or even how to invent ideas, but how to *be inventive thinkers and writers*. Invention, we believe, is not merely a skill, but an intellectual posture that transfers to and develops within disciplines across the curriculum.

From our experience as composition teachers, we have come to believe that invention lies at the center of the composition enterprise, and is fundamental to transforming students from apprehensive first-year college writers to curious intellectuals. Although not necessarily taught explicitly in other courses, invention is often the skill that most first-year college students need as they develop a genuine sense of inquiry. And contrary to its sublimated placement in “the writing process,” the complicated act of invention is not merely an initial phase of writing. It is a perspective that gives way to inquiry. Learning how to invent involves re-learning the possibilities of everyday life and being *re-written* as a thinker.

Beyond Dualisms

Many students have been led to believe in two unhelpful dualisms: (1) *personal vs. private life* and (2) *non-academic vs. academic life*. When students cling to these, they are often unable to grow as writers and thinkers. But *CEL* attempts to break down these dualisms, explicitly and implicitly, through-

out the chapters. First, although *CEL* focuses on students' abilities to invent ideas, the approach does not emphasize the internal or intimately personal. In fact, the chapters prompt students to see invention as an intellectual-social act—one in which the thinker/writer is steeped in public/civic affairs. The Point of Contact sections prompt topics to emerge not from the writer's enclosed consciousness, but from the writer's interactions in everyday life. The Public Resonance sections help students to see how ideas emerge and develop from layers of social connectedness. Second, the chapters teach students to see writing (which they often designate as an exclusively academic behavior) as an academic-public-personal behavior. All the chapter sections, in some way, teach students to take writing outside of the classroom—and to bring everyday life into the classroom (or the academic consciousness).

The Layout

For the last year of the book's development, we attempted to create a layout that would visually appeal to students. As incoming college students are increasingly steeped in a culture of visually sophisticated appeals for their attention, they require textbooks that speak with equal sophistication. *CEL* chapters speak with written text and with images, and at the end of each chapter, students are prompted to analyze the images in light of the chapter's focus. Our goal was not to simply appeal to a "visual generation," but to teach a generation that is constantly bombarded with images to see rhetorically.

Also, you may notice that the sections in each chapter appear on two-page spreads. With this design, we hoped to create a new textbook space—a new geography—for students to enter. Because *CEL* is focused on creating a new student perspective about writing, it also encourages students to approach textbook pages as spaces. Our intention in clumping information (into chapter sections) was not to "package" ideas for students, but to invite them *into* the pages—rather than *through* them. Though this may seem like a subtle difference from other textbooks, we have been convinced that such small details may further prompt students to constantly make connections between the rhetorical strategies offered in the pages and the material world around them.

What is Third Space?

Third space has been a controlling idea for the pedagogy of *CEL*. Borrowed from critical geographer Edward Soja, third space is the collision of the "real and the imagined." We see it as the collision of traditional academic space (books, classrooms, desks) and the everywhere-else of student life. *CEL* invites students to carry academia out, to smear school across everyday life and to bring everyday life into the classroom. Of course textbooks have been doing this for years, but *CEL* focuses on this intersection as the primary tool of invention. This approach is developed throughout *CEL*: The Point of Contact sections, for instance, prompt students to *go*, *do*, and *ask*. Third space is created in that moment when the student, in some place beyond traditional academia, embodies critical inquiry. And as we suggest throughout the chapters, this moment is *writing* as much as keying words into a computer.

A Final Note

When we began writing *The Composition of Everyday Life*, we imagined a textbook that demystifies the acts of writing, and *teaches* the acts of invention. We imagined a book that students could use as an exciting reader and a powerful rhetorical heuristic. And in considering the instructional realities of the field, we imagined a book that would be valuable for part-time instructors, who often work without a network of support.

While we considered the more explicit objectives of composition studies (statements by NCTE and WPA), we also studied the undercurrents of the field to detect the underlying crises of typical classrooms and the inclinations of typical (and not-so-typical) students. We found that students are increasingly more transient, intellectually tied to life beyond traditional academic space. This growing body of students (and their instructors), we imagined, need a textbook that engages (rather than ignores) the complexities of everyday life. We hope this textbook achieves, at least to some degree, our original hopes.

Using CEL as a Thematic Reader

Readings throughout this book can be grouped thematically—according to subject matter. Here, we suggest how readings from different chapters might be grouped together thematically. As you explore a particular subject (Education and Learning, for example), you might focus on a particular rhetorical aim (such as Evaluating or Proposing a Solution). Or you might explore a subject area without a particular aim in mind, eventually discovering not only a writing topic but also the rhetorical aim into which it falls. The common subjects are: Education and Learning, Justice and Equality, Environment and Animals, Consumerism and Economy, America, The World, Self, Others (Community), Language and Culture, Gender and Identity, Parents and Family, Popular Culture, Technology. More complete lists of readings for each subject are available in the *Survival Guide for Instructors* and on the CEL Web site: <http://english.wadsworth.com/maukmetz/>.

Education and Learning: How do people view education in both formal and informal settings? What is the role of education in our lives, and how might we view that role differently? A variety of readings explore Education and Learning from a variety of viewpoints. Through reading, writing, and discussion, you might explore Education and Learning to the extent that you come to think differently about it and can participate in an ongoing dialogue about its role in people's lives. You might discover an important point about education by exploring a memory, identifying a less-usual relationship, making sense out of an observation, redefining a key term, and so on.

"The Grapes of Mrs. Rath," Steve Mockensturm
"A *Beat* Education," Leonard Kress
"The Aloha Spirit: A Reminiscence," Aunty D.
"What the Honey Meant," Cindy Bosley
"Have It Your Way," Simon Benlow
"College: What's in It for Me?" Steven M. Richardson
"Why We No Longer Use the 'H' Word," Dan Wilkins
"Why a Great Books Education Is the Most Practical," David Crabtree
"Entitlement Education," Daniel Bruno
"When Bright Girls Decide That Math Is a 'Waste of Time,'" Susan Jacoby
"How to Say Nothing in 500 Words," Paul Roberts
"Television: Destroying Childhood," Rose Batchel
"The Menstrual Cycle," Christiane Northrup, M.D.

Justice and Equality: A quick survey of the readings about Justice and Equality listed below suggests a range of areas: Native American rights, body type, legal drugs, the mentally and physically challenged, wildlife, and so on. These readings can help you identify and explain a relationship, analyze a concept (such as "justice" or "equality"), respond to an argument, identify a cause or propose a solution, and so on. What is justice, and how might exploring the concept of justice in today's world be of value? What interesting idea about justice and equality might you discover and share with others?

"Why We No Longer Use the 'H' Word," Dan Wilkins
"Crimes Against Humanity," Ward Churchill
"Cruelty, Civility, and Other Weighty Matters," Ann Marie Paulin
"Beware of Drug Sales," Therese Cherry
"Is Hunting Ethical?" Ann F. Causey
"The New Politics of Consumption," Juliet Schor
"Why Doesn't GM Sell Crack?" Michael Moore
"The Menstrual Cycle," Christiane Northrup, M.D.
"An Apology to Future Generations," Simon Benlow

Environment and Animals: Land, trees, weasels, chimps, porches, smoking, hunting—and the role that we as consumers play in it all. These readings, which offer different ways of looking at Environment and Animals, encourage you to explore ideas beyond your initial thoughts and beyond conventional beliefs. What is your relationship to the land? To the air? To the animals? How might you think differently about that relationship? And what might be the consequence of your new way of thinking?

"Americans and the Land," John Steinbeck
"Living Like Weasels," Annie Dillard
"Planting a Tree," Edward Abbey
"Gombe," Jane Goodall
"The Front Porch," Chester McCovey
"My Daughter Smokes," Alice Walker
"Is Hunting Ethical?" Ann F. Causey
"The New Politics of Consumption," Juliet Schor
"The Obligation to Endure," Rachel Carson
"Technology, Movement, and Sound," Ed Bell
"The Parting Breath of the Now Perfect Woman," Chester McCovey
"Farming and the Global Economy," Wendell Berry
"The Menstrual Cycle," Christiane Northrup, M.D.
"An Apology to Future Generations," Simon Benlow

Consumerism and Economy: Several readings in this book encourage you to think about yourself as a consumer. What, and how, do you consume? And what, if anything, do you produce by consuming? As with other subjects in CEL, you might spend an entire semester exploring this one subject area, or you might explore it for just one assignment. Perhaps it would be of great value to spend an entire semester exploring just this question: What does it mean to be a consumer?

"The Front Porch," Chester McCovey
 "Have It Your Way," Simon Benlow
 "Response to Juliet Schor," Betsy Taylor
 "Entitlement Education," Daniel Bruno
 "Whales R Us," Jayme Stayer
 "Rethinking Divorce," Barbara Dafoe Whitehead
 "The New Politics of Consumption," Juliet Schor
 "Sex, Lies, and Advertising," Deborah Tannen
 "Technology, Movement, and Sound," Ed Bell
 "Television: Destroying Childhood," Rose Batchel
 "Farming and the Global Economy," Wendell Berry
 "An Apology to Future Generations," Simon Benlow

America: What does it mean to be an American? What is "America"? Are beauty pageants American? And what about The Aloha Spirit? These readings deal with America and being American. They allow you to explore the relationship between yourself and your country. (International students may find this subject to be especially interesting as they bring a unique perspective.) To what degree do the two—individual and country—influence each other? You can make observations, evaluate, identify causes, propose solutions, and so on. And, you can explore how America communicates with you.

"The Grapes of Mrs. Rath," Steve Mockensturm
 "Americans and the Land," John Steinbeck
 "Planting a Tree," Edward Abbey
 "Crimes Against Humanity," Ward Churchill
 "Cruelty, Civility, and Other Weighty Matters," Ann Marie Paulin
 "My Daughter Smokes," Alice Walker
 "Whales R Us," Jayme Stayer
 "The New Politics of Consumption," Juliet Schor
 "The Plight of High-Status Women," Barbara Dafoe Whitehead
 "Hip-Hop: A Roadblock or Pathway to Black Empowerment?" Geoffrey Bennett
 "Why Doesn't GM Sell Crack?" Michael Moore

The World: This book encourages you to look outward—from self, to tribe, to nation, to world. The readings below allow you to think about your role in the world.

How do your actions impact the world, and what is the world's impact on you? From "The Aloha Spirit" (hello) to "An Apology to Future Generations" (I'm sorry), you can read about and discuss a very interesting relationship—the one you have with the world.

"Aloha Spirit: A Reminiscence," Auntie D.
 "Planting a Tree," Edward Abbey
 "Gombe," Jane Goodall
 "The New Politics of Consumption," Juliet Schor
 "When Bright Girls Decide That Math Is a 'Waste of Time,'" Susan Jacoby
 "Farming and the Global Economy," Wendell Berry
 "Why Doesn't GM Sell Crack?" Michael Moore
 "The Menstrual Cycle," Christiane Northrup, M.D.
 "An Apology to Future Generations," Simon Benlow

Self: Looking at self can be fascinating and worthwhile. The readings in this book encourage you to explore your own life in a way you have, perhaps, not done before. These readings about Self go beyond mere expressive writing. They encourage you to connect with others, even though—or perhaps, *especially when*—you are looking inward, at yourself. You can explore how these readings, your own writing, and focused discussion with others helps you to see differently—to learn something about yourself and connect it to the world around you.

"How I Lost the Junior Miss Pageant," Cindy Bosley
 "A *Beat* Education," Leonard Kress
 "Thrill of Victory, Agony of Parents," Jennifer Schwind-Pawlak
 "What the Honey Meant," Cindy Bosley
 "Friend or Foe," Dean A. Meek
 "What it Means to be Creative," S.I. Hayakawa
 "Cruelty, Civility, and Other Weighty Matters," Ann Marie Paulin
 "My Daughter Smokes," Alice Walker
 "The *Andy Griffith Show*: Return to Normal," Ed Bell
 "Rethinking Divorce," Barbara Dafoe Whitehead
 "The New Politics of Consumption," Juliet Schor
 "Throwing Up Childhood," Leonard Kress
 "In Bed," Joan Didion
 "The Plight of High-Status Women," Barbara Dafoe Whitehead
 "The Menstrual Cycle," Christiane Northrup, M.D.

Others (Community): Can we look at ourselves without looking at our community? Both subjects (Self and Others) explore relationships between the individual and his or her surroundings. What is community? How is community created? These readings will help you to explore what we commonly call *community*, to con-

sider how it works, and to examine your place in it. An entire writing course might be an exploration of one very important question: What is the relationship between community and communication?

"The Aloha Spirit: A Reminiscence," Aunty D.
"Dog-Tied," David Hawes
"Living Like Weasels," Annie Dillard
"A Building of Mailboxes," Dean Meek
"Cruelty, Civility, and Other Weighty Matters,"
Ann Marie Paulin
"Is Hunting Ethical?" Ann F. Causey
"Rethinking Divorce," Barbara Dafoe Whitehead
"Technology, Movement, and Sound," Ed Bell
"Thoughts on the International Access Symbol,"
Dan Wilkins
"Television: Destroying Childhood," Rose Batchel
"The Parting Breath of the Now Perfect Woman,"
Chester McCovey
"Hip-Hop: A Roadblock or Pathway to Black
Empowerment?" Geoffrey Bennett
"Farming and the Global Economy," Wendell Berry
"Why Doesn't GM.Sell Crack?" Michael Moore
"An Apology to Future Generations," Simon Benlow

Language and Culture: How is language important in culture? How is language important in the way a person thinks? These readings deal with the relationship between language and culture—between words and ideas. For example, "Aloha" is a word, but it is also a concept—a very important one in Hawaii! There is an Aloha Spirit, a culture of "Aloha"—not just a word. This reading and others will help you step back and explore the relationship between words, ideas and actions. Through exploration of this subject, you might discover that your college writing class is something more than you had originally imagined it to be.

"The Aloha Spirit: A Reminiscence," Aunty D.
"The Grapes of Mrs. Rath," Steve Mockensturm
"In Praise of the Humble Comma," Pico Iyer
"Why We No Longer Use the 'H' Word,"
Dan Wilkins
"Crimes Against Humanity," Ward Churchill
"Why a Great Books Education Is the Most Practical,"
David Crabtree
"Whales R Us," Jayme Stayer
"*Pulp Fiction*: Valuable Critique or Use Titillation?"
Simon Benlow
"Rethinking Divorce," Barbara Dafoe Whitehead
"Sex, Lies, and Advertising," Deborah Tannen
"When Bright Girls Decide That Math Is a 'Waste of
Time,'" Susan Jacoby
"The Plight of High-Status Women," Barbara Dafoe
Whitehead

"Hip-Hop: A Roadblock or Pathway to Black
Empowerment?" Geoffrey Bennett
"Why Doesn't GM.Sell Crack?" Michael Moore
"The Menstrual Cycle," Christiane Northrup, M.D.

Gender and Identity: What role does Gender play in our lives? What does it mean to be male or female? How does gender affect our identities? And what influence can we have on issues of gender and identity? This group of readings, like the others, can be used in combination with other reading groups—from America or Pop Culture, for example. Instead of exploring just Gender and Identity, you might narrow your focus to readings that relate to Gender and Identify *and* Pop Culture.

"How I Lost the Junior Miss Pageant," Cindy Bosley
"The Thrill of Victory . . . The Agony of Parents,"
Jennifer Schwind-Pawlak
"The Ring of Truth: My Child Is Growing Up,"
Jessie Thuma
"Cruelty, Civility, and Other Weighty Matters,"
Ann Marie Paulin
"My Daughter Smokes," Alice Walker
"Rethinking Divorce," Barbara Dafoe Whitehead
"Throwing Up Childhood," Leonard Kress
"Sex, Lies, and Advertising," Deborah Tannen
"When Bright Girls Decide That Math Is a 'Waste of
Time,'" Susan Jacoby
"In Bed," Joan Didion
"The Plight of High-Status Women," Barbara Dafoe
Whitehead
"The Menstrual Cycle," Christiane Northrup, M.D.

Parents and Family: What role do our parents play in our lives? Such a question might be explored endlessly with interesting results for both writer and reader. You might spend an entire semester exploring issues about Parents and Family. (Such a simple subject area can prove to be far more complicated—and interesting—than you first imagined.) What might be the value of thinking analytically and finding public resonance regarding the subject of parents and family?

"How I Lost the Junior Miss Pageant," Cindy Bosley
"The Aloha Spirit: A Reminiscence," Aunty D.
"Thrill of Victory, Agony of Parents," Jennifer
Schwind-Pawlak
"The Ring of Truth: My Child Is Growing Up,"
Jessie Thuma
"What the Honey Meant," Cindy Bosley
"Friend or Foe," Dean A. Meek
"Gombe," Jane Goodall
"The Front Porch," Chester McCovey
"A Building of Mailboxes," Dean Meek
"My Daughter Smokes," Alice Walker

"*The Andy Griffith Show: Return to Normal*," Ed Bell
 "Rethinking Divorce," Barbara Dafoe Whitehead
 "Throwing Up Childhood," Leonard Kress
 "An Apology to Future Generations," Simon Benlow

Popular Culture: What is the relationship between the individual and his or her pop culture? In what ways are we products of our own popular culture? From beauty pageants to hopping trains, from belly rings to dogs and beer, the readings dealing with popular culture allow you to consider the world that surrounds you from a fresh perspective. You can explore the *why* of your own behavior, considering how you—and others—are influenced by pressures of which you are both very aware and barely aware.

"How I Lost the Junior Miss Pageant," Cindy Bosley
 "A *Beat* Education," Leonard Kress
 "The Front Porch," Chester McCovey
 "Have It Your Way," Simon Benlow
 "Crimes Against Humanity," Ward Churchill
 "Cruelty, Civility, and Other Weighty Matters,"
 Ann Marie Paulin
 "Entitlement Education," Daniel Bruno
 "Is Hunting Ethical?" Ann F. Causey
 "*Star Wars*," Roger Ebert
 "Whales R Us," Jayme Stayer
 "*The Andy Griffith Show: Return to Normal*," Ed Bell
 "*Pulp Fiction: Valuable Critique or Use Titillation?*"
 Simon Benlow
 "Rethinking Divorce," Barbara Dafoe Whitehead
 "The New Politics of Consumption," Juliet Schor
 "Sex, Lies, and Advertising," Deborah Tannen
 "Television: Destroying Childhood," Rose Batchel
 "The Plight of High-Status Women," Barbara Dafoe
 Whitehead
 "The Parting Breath of the Now Perfect Woman,"
 Chester McCovey
 "Hip-Hop: A Roadblock or Pathway to Black
 Empowerment?" Geoffrey Bennett

Technology: We cannot overlook technology. How does it influence the way we live? Through reading, writing, and discussion, you can explore beyond your initial thoughts and perceptions. You can consider the complex relationship in today's world between the individual and technology—or between one individual and another *because of technology*. What idea about technology might you discover and share with others, helping them to think or act differently?

"Americans and the Land," John Steinbeck
 "Planting a Tree," Edward Abbey
 "The Front Porch," Chester McCovey
 "Cruelty, Civility, and Other Weighty Matters,"
 Ann Marie Paulin
 "Beware of Drug Sales," Therese Cherry
 "Whales R Us," Jayme Stayer
 "*The Andy Griffith Show: Return to Normal*," Ed Bell
 "The New Politics of Consumption," Juliet Schor
 "Technology, Movement, and Sound," Ed Bell
 "Television: Destroying Childhood," Rose Batchel
 "The Parting Breath of the Now Perfect Woman,"
 Chester McCovey
 "Farming and the Global Economy," Wendell Berry
 "Why Doesn't GM Sell Crack?" Michael Moore
 "The Menstrual Cycle," Christiane Northrup, M.D.
 "An Apology to Future Generations," Simon Benlow

The first and most important principle of this book is that writing is deeply connected to everyday life. A writer develops ideas and revises thoughts simply by living life. If we see writing as something that only occurs during a few short hours before a paper is due, we shrink the processes and layers of writing into a single isolated act. Granted, some isolated typing, drafting, and editing is necessary for academic writing. But such work is actually only a portion of the real-life activities of a writer. Real writing occurs long before the computer is turned on or the pen is in hand. Real writing involves a perspective that informs what and how we see on a daily basis:

- We come in contact with something (an aluminum can on the sidewalk, for example).
- This bothers us (not just intellectually, but even physically—perhaps we feel anger, sorrow, frustration, or a sense of being alone in the world).
- This matters to us, so we pursue it intellectually (we think about it).
- We ask questions to sort it all out (why do people litter? what are the causes? what, if anything, can be done about it? what are the solutions? and so on).
- We keep it to ourselves, or we deliver our thoughts to others.

The point here is that writers often get ideas (and revise old ones) when they are away from the keyboard and outside the classroom: in a movie theatre, a city park, Venice Beach, their parents' dinner table, Interstate 80, Mud Hens Stadium, or Paris, France. This may seem absurd—but the important point is that writing is an extension of living and being curious. Writing is not the performance of something we know; rather, it is *the act of inventing, developing, and reinventing what can be known*. The entire process extends in all directions beyond the act of typing on the keyboard or writing with a pen; it begins with the act of living and extends past an assignment deadline. Writing also changes everyday life: it changes the individual consciousness of the writer, the reader(s), and the people who interact with both of them.

How to Use *The Composition of Everyday Life*

CEL offers the student several possibilities for inventing and developing writing topics. (1) The Point of Contact sections in chapters 1–11 are designed to launch you into an exploration of everyday behaviors, policies, situations, attitudes, and arguments, which you can then develop into a topic. Following the Point of Contact sections, the Analysis and Public Resonance sections in each chapter will help you examine the topic and extend your own thinking. (2) Chapters 1–11 contain several readings that exemplify writing and thinking strategies. After each reading, questions follow that will help you to analyze the issues and the actual writing techniques of the authors. Each reading also offers several “Ideas for Writing,” which are designed to generate potential topics. (3) The readings throughout the book can be categorized according to certain themes (see p. xvi). Rather than focus on one chapter at a time, students can read several (or all) content-related essays in a category, and then use the **Invention** section from one of the chapters (1–11) to develop a particular topic.

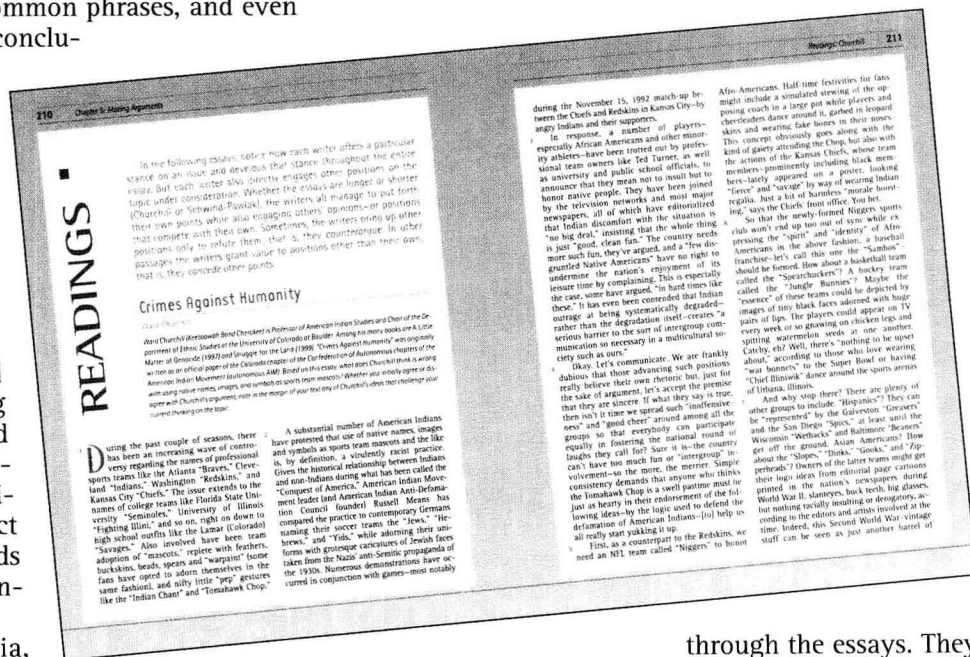
Chapter Readings

Reading in academia is different from casual reading. When we read a newspaper, magazine, or popular literature casually, we breeze through paragraphs and over the top of ideas. Such material is filled with familiar ideas, common phrases, and even predictable transitions and conclusions. When we read such material, often we expect only to pick up some basic information or follow a fairly simple plot. Of course, this is not altogether bad. Such reading serves a purpose. We may need to pick up ideas quickly or even follow a plot without our critical radar on. But such reading has its downside: we tend not to learn much or to rethink issues in any significant way because we expect to encounter ideas and words that echo our own preconceptions and prejudices.

However, in academia, we read for different reasons: to rethink issues, to discover positions we had not previously imagined, to revise common perceptions. To fulfill such goals, we cannot breeze through paragraphs. We must expect to work through ideas, even to struggle at times. And most importantly, we must expect to be surprised, to have our comfortable mental rooms messed up occasionally. Reading in academia means being intellectually adventurous and expecting something new or radically different. It also means reading actively: always analyzing and refiguring ideas as they develop throughout a text.

To help you read actively and critically, each chapter of *CEL* features an *annotated* essay (an essay with comments and analysis in the margins). The annotations have two primary purposes: (1) to point out particular writing strategies, and (2) to illustrate how one might actively read and respond to a written

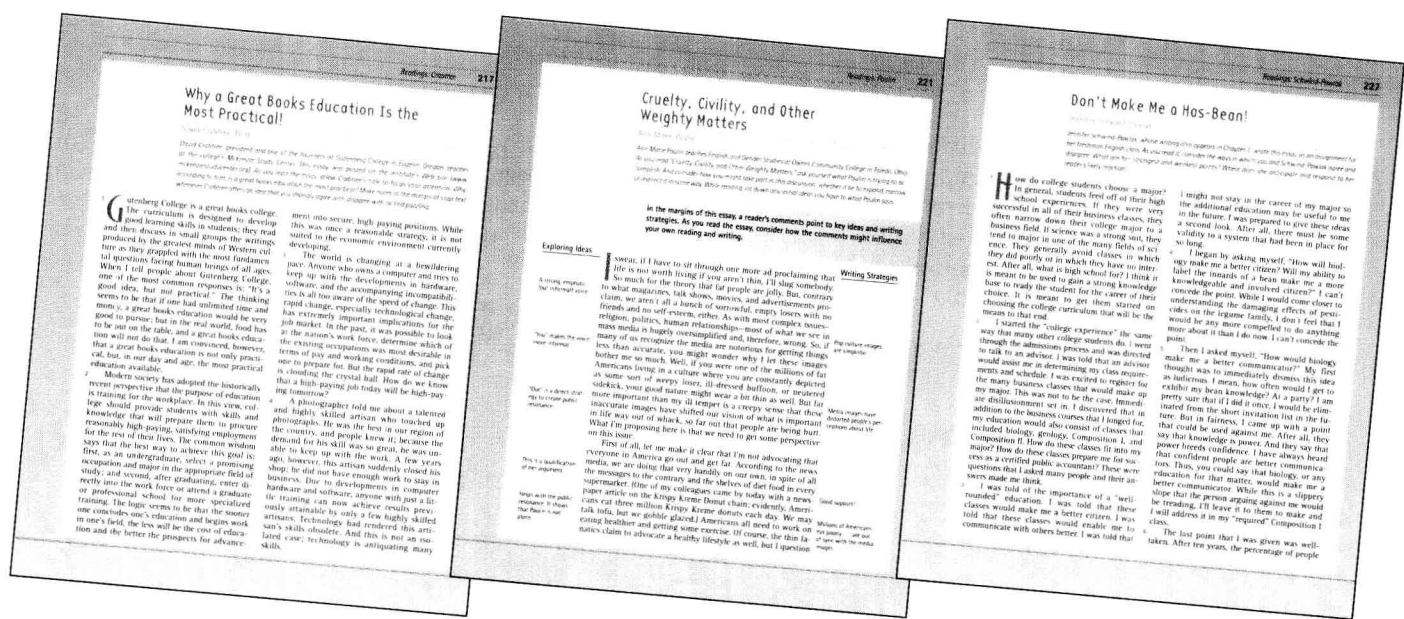
text. As you will notice, the annotations vary from chapter to chapter to illustrate a range of possible strategies for active reading. You might see the annotations as an active reader walking



through the essays. They show the reader stopping at certain places, noticing particular claims, and speaking back to ideas. Readers who engage a text in this fashion gain a deep awareness of writing and are more likely to extract writing techniques than are those who quickly read through a text. As you read all the texts in *CEL*, try these active reading strategies on your own.

Each reading begins with a brief author bio and offers a reading strategy or two, something to help you read with curiosity and focus. Each reading is followed by a series of “Exploring Ideas” questions, which pick up where the reading strategies left off. These questions encourage you to explore the author’s ideas in a way that an inquisitive thinker might.

The readings are placed between a reading strategy and several “Exploring Ideas” questions to encourage you to actively explore the ideas expressed in the reading. This way, even though the readings



precede the **Invention** section of the chapter, they become an important part of your invention process. How? The “Exploring Ideas” questions usually begin by asking you what the author said and meant, thus “testing” your reading comprehension. Then they ask you to consider how your thinking is similar to or different from the author’s. You are then prompted to explore these ideas both inside and outside the classroom through discussion with others, and to consider how other people’s thoughts are similar to or different from your own. Finally, you are asked to write in response to your exploration, explaining how your ideas have changed or developed. Responding to these questions can be quite an experience (as it is meant to be), helping you to move through a process of exploration, driven by writing and discussion and intended to create *new ideas!*

The “Exploring Ideas” questions (which correspond to the **Invention** section of the chapter) are followed by “Technique and Style” questions (which correspond to the **Delivery** section). And finally, each reading is followed by several “Ideas for Writing.” These “Ideas for Writing” are not called “Writing Topics” because you shouldn’t see them as final topics about which to write, but instead as starting points for exploration, which ultimately help you to discover—after much exploration through writing and discussion—your own main idea.

The readings throughout *CEL* come from writers who represent a variety of disciplines and career fields, such as history, economics, business, computer graphics, literature, and the sciences. Despite the different disciplines and fields, they all seek to communicate a point that involves and impacts the world around them. And while writing techniques and personal styles differ, some qualities are constant: valuable insights, well-supported ideas, and appropriate tone. As you read through the chapters and encounter professionals from different disciplines, keep in mind that these essays were not written for a college writing textbook. The essays are a sample of the real writing that gets done in the public sphere; they show real economists, real scientists, real philosophers, real people talking to their colleagues and to the public, trying to change the world for the better. These are not writers locked inside an academic tower; rather, they are people who are deeply connected to, and intellectually stimulated by, the world around them.

CEL also invites you to find reading material on your own. After the chapter readings, each chapter contains an **Outside Reading** activity, which asks you to search the Internet, library databases, Infotrac, or print journals and magazines for a relevant article. This can be an opportunity to explore a vast amount of writing that is both valuable and easily accessible.

Invention

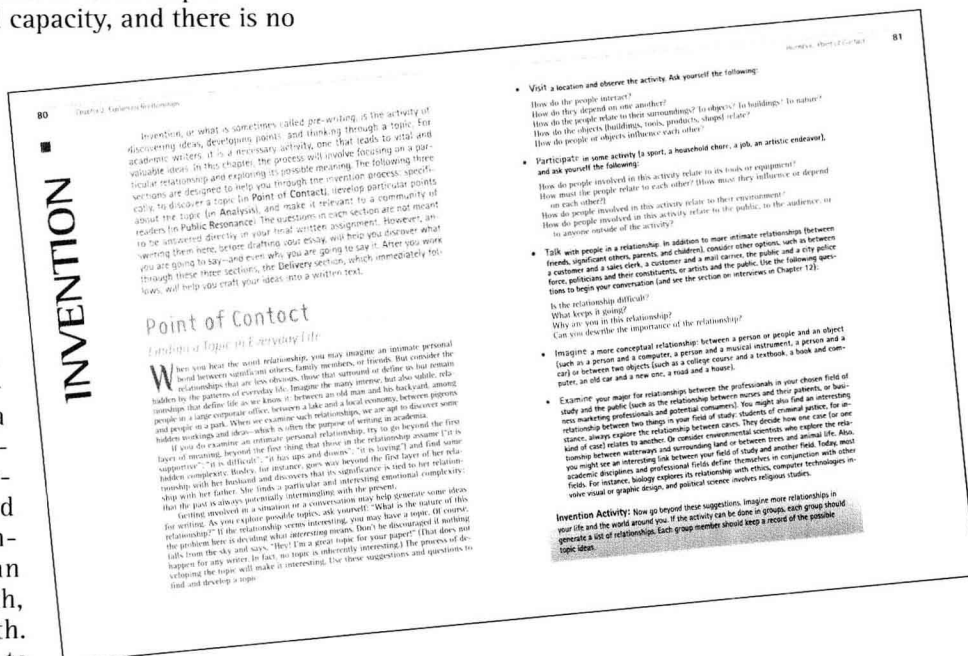
Have you ever wondered why some writers draw you in with new ideas and others seem like they are merely rehearsing their thoughts? What causes the difference? You might be inclined to believe that some people are simply better writers than others; however, good writing comes as a result of particular strategies, not innate mental capacity, and there is no more important writing strategy than *invention*.

Invention, or what is sometimes called *pre-writing*, is the process of discovering some idea you are not presently thinking. It is the activity of developing points and thinking through potential topics. Often it is associated with only one particular activity: coming up with an idea to write about. However, invention is a complex activity that extends far beyond the initial topic idea. It involves committing to an idea, exploring it in depth, and discovering its worth. When writers take the time to explore topics, they discover what is beyond their own bias and even beyond the common topical audiences. They discover something that is around in everyone's minds makes all the difference between writing that introduces new ideas and writing that offers nothing but a way to fulfill an assignment.

When college instructors assign writing, they are not expecting students to type the first thoughts that enter their minds and then go to spell check. Instructors want students to explore, to seek out ideas and extend their thinking. Instructors want students to discover new ideas for themselves and to communicate those ideas well. And without invention,

without the tools of discovery, such expectations are nearly impossible to meet.

The following three sections, which appear in each chapter, are designed to help you through the invention process. The first section, Point of Contact,



will help you discover a topic from everyday life; the second, Analysis, will help you explore the topic and develop particular points for writing assignments; and the third section, Public Resonance, will help you to make the topic relevant to a community of readers. The questions in each section are not meant to be answered directly in your final written assignment. Answering them before you start drafting will, however, help you discover ideas.

We also suggest that you go beyond the questions in each section. While we hope that these particular questions help to generate ideas for your writing projects, nothing is more valuable to a writer than generating her or his own questions. As you proceed through *CEL*, we hope you will find yourself asking your own invention questions.

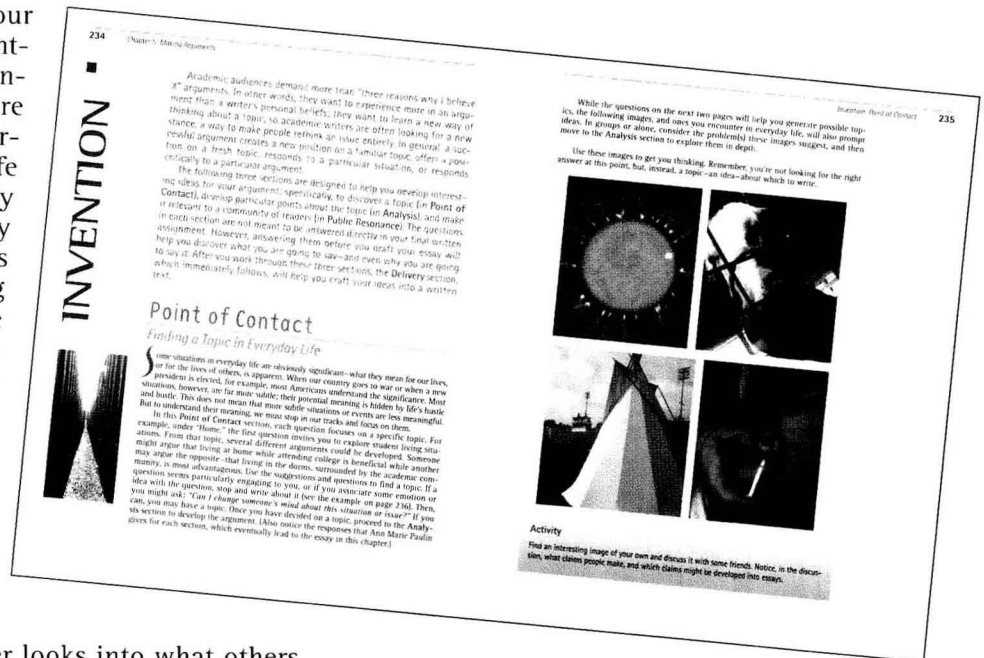
Point of Contact

As we go through our daily lives, we pass by countless situations, disregard unlimited issues, and ignore crowds of people. We overlook them to get through life and carry on with our daily routines and rituals. To stay focused on our daily goals (going to work, getting groceries, driving in the right lane, staying relatively sane), we have to ignore much of what goes on around us. However, a writer (or someone developing a writer's perspective) stops in the middle of life's hustle and bustle and notices the potential meaning and significance in things; that is, the writer looks into what others disregard and sees the extraordinary in the ordinary. A writer finds the significance in an abandoned building, a busy shopping mall, or a group of young children. Before a writer can start writing, he or she must see life.

The Point of Contact section, after the readings in each chapter, invites the writer to slow down, to stop, to notice common and not-so-common aspects of life. The *point of contact* refers to the intersection of the writer's perspective and the real world. It is where the writer's vision collides with issues, events, situations, behaviors, and people. The idea here is that writing is more than simply arranging preconceived ideas—writing is about discovering something that might otherwise go unno-

ticed. Therefore, writers have to be ready; their radar must be on.

As you go through the Point of Contact sections, you will notice lists of questions, which are designed to generate possibilities for writing topics. Think of the questions as exploration tools, raising possible points of interest for writing. The lists are by no means exhaustive; they are simply examples of what can be asked. Follow up (in peer groups or alone) to generate more questions. (And if you are outside of an academic setting, at home, for instance, it is certainly fair play to borrow a family member or friend to help with the brainstorming.)



For instance, let us use the aluminum can example. Imagine a discarded soda can on the side of the road. Why do people throw trash out car

windows? What kind of thinking drives people to do this? But beyond discovering why something occurs, remember that analysis also involves an exploration of significance (what ideas the soda can suggests). For example:

It may have something to do with Americans' assumption that we have unlimited space, that with all this land and open highways we cannot possibly clutter up our living space. This assumption is also apparent in the way we build new homes and neighborhoods—sprawling outward at every opportunity.

It could also have something to do with people's sense of property. In the United States, we stress the idea of personal property (with fences, "Keep Out" and "No Trespassing" signs) but we have very little to say about collective property. The idea is almost foreign. Most people don't consider the highways, the forests, the fields outside their own backyards to be theirs, so they feel no remorse in polluting. The aluminum can, then, represents an entire way of thinking in the United States.

[illegible]

Analysis is an important part of the invention process. However, it is also the part that some students skip over, thus leading them to express ideas that will not engage their reader (or listener)—whether that person is a professor, an employer, a stranger, or a friend. Consider the following two paragraphs from a somewhat typical rough draft.

I feel that a major problem in today's world is the fact that 18–20-year olds can't purchase or consume alcoholic beverages. Many people feel that this is not right and would like to see it changed. An 18-year-old is considered an adult, but why can't an adult drink alcohol?

An adult, a person who is 18 years old, should be able to drink alcohol. If people think that an 18-year-old isn't responsible, then why does he have to register for a draft, and if drafted, go off to war and defend your country? An 18-year-old is also allowed to vote, and decide on who is going to run the country. This has a major effect on the country. Another reason that the age should be lowered is that people are doing it anyways, and it might cut back on costs for the police. It would be one less thing they have to worry about.

We do not dispute the writer's claim that a citizen who risks life for country ought to be allowed to legally drink a beer at the local pub. Our concern here is that this exact argument, acceptable as it may be, has been made countless times before. It has been around since the 1960s, and our writer is merely getting in a long line to restate it again. But good invention strategies, including analysis, help the writer to think beyond this standard approach—to think more adventurously, to venture into the frontier of ideas.

The writer of our typical rough draft asks, “*If people think that an 18-year-old isn't responsible, then why does he have to register for a draft, and if drafted, go off to war and defend your country?*” Then the writer moves on to another point. But

what would happen if, instead of employing this tried-and-true approach, he analyzed and tried to answer his own question? First, he might ask, *what are the reasons that 18-year-olds cannot legally drink?* Instead of assuming there is no good reason for this (that it's just absurd and unfair), our writer might try getting at the reasons. He might start by imagining that elected officials would not discriminate against young eligible voters for no reason at all. He might suspect that the laws are the result of traffic accidents (or he might have some other theory), and he might research the issue for more information. In short, a little analysis may lead our writer to a better understanding of the issue—perhaps even changing his own mind about it.

He then might go on to the second part of his question: *Why must 18-year-olds (instead of 40-year-olds, for example) have to register for a draft?* The possible answers might be enlightening: because 18-year-olds are less likely to be married and have children; because they are less likely to own businesses, employ others, and pay taxes; because they are more physically fit; because they are more willing to take risks; because they have less political power and less financial influence; because in the past (and perhaps in the future) the United States fought wars that required the sacrifice of many thousands of lives, and for the reasons just mentioned (and probably many more), 18-year-old lives can be sacrificed as well as any. These answers are harsh and bleak. You may disagree and come up with your own ideas about why 18-year-olds are more likely to be drafted as soldiers, and you may be right. The point is: analysis leads to the complexities of issues, and revealing those complexities, rather than avoiding them, is at the heart of college writing.

The Analysis questions in each chapter are designed to help you explore the complexities of your topic. Use these questions as starting points and then try to develop your own, more particular, questions.