

DISCOVERING ARGUMENTS

*An Introduction to
Critical Thinking and
Writing with Readings*



Dean Memering • William Palmer

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An Introduction to Critical Thinking and Writing, with Readings

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Preface

Discovering Arguments: An Introduction to Critical Thinking and Writing, with Readings encourages you to discover the critical powers of your mind. By “thinking” we mean not only analyzing a text but also extending from the text, using it as a springboard for your own interpretation, imagination, and insight.

At the end of the year 2000, the media were full of interviews, articles, and talking heads discussing the candidates, then Governor George Bush of Texas and Vice President Al Gore, and the issues of the presidential election: vouchers for private schools, prescription drugs for the elderly, the future role of the military, gun control, stem-cell research, and so on. Most viewers had simple responses to the arguments: “I agree” or “I disagree.” Many responded with analytical statements: “it will never work . . . it will cost too much . . . it benefits only the rich.” Some people had more detailed responses: “Why don’t we try that program for the medical use of marijuana in a few states to see how well it works?” To argue well, you need to know some history of an issue, but you don’t have to be a genius to recognize strategies of argument and persuasion (recognizing similarities and differences for example). Most students can learn them. Discovering Arguments will help you do this.

We use the terms argue and persuade in their several meanings. One common meaning is “to fight or dispute with words,” as in a heated argument on whether same-sex marriages should be legal. Another is “to offer reasons or evidence,” as does a lawyer who argues that eyewitnesses can identify an accused. Also, an argument can mean a theory, a philosophy, or hypothesis, as in the argument that “all life is based on self-interest.” In composition classes, argument often means writing a paper in which you construct an argument for or against, or both for and against, a thesis by giving reasons, examples, facts, and other evidence.

Discovering Arguments is a book about using your mind, making thoughtful applications of reading, writing, and persuasion. One of the significant differ-

ences between Discovering Arguments and other books is our emphasis on audience and persuasive appeals: logos (using reasons), pathos (using emotions), and ethos (using ethics). These appeals offer powerful tools that form the center of thinking, reading, and writing activities in the book. Classroom experience shows that students find this approach useful, and it quickly influences the quality of their thinking and writing.

Except for our collection of logical fallacies (which we call “problems in reasoning”), we have made little use of the premises and conclusions of formal logic; instead, you will discover that there are ample resources for argumentation using informal reasoning. Among these we have included a simplified presentation of philosopher Stephen Toulmin’s general theory: most arguments are similar; they make some claim that must be supported by credible evidence.

Writing awakens the mind. It causes you to search for ideas, to construct and analyze thoughts that connect with your audience. Overall, this book values reading and writing for their relationships with thinking. You can view essays, books, newspapers, magazines—any text—as the thoughts of other men and women reaching out to their readers. Reading and writing are like a conversation between you and your readers: a conversation that awakens your mental powers as you work through details, facts, library materials, probable arguments, contradictions, paradoxes, and the search for truth.

Discovering Arguments incorporates both product and process approaches to learning. As a reader analyzing an essay, poem, or story, you may see a selection as a product—a fusion of thought and form. Or, as a writer working on a report or an argument, you may see your task as a process of planning, composing, and revising. Process approaches help you find subjects that matter to you and to a real audience. Your process approach can assist you with finding information to assemble your thoughts and, eventually, to reach the revision stages, when your thoughts and language skills come together.

THE BOOK IS MULTIFUNCTIONAL

Discovering Arguments can be used as a rhetoric: it presents a variety of strategies for communicating clearly and persuasively. It can be used as a reader: you will find a variety of papers from our students; published student essays (from Newsweek’s “My Turn” column); and essays, articles, poems, and stories by professional writers such as Mitch Albom, Ellen Goodman, Richard Selzer, Thomas Sowell, Deborah Tannen, Martin Luther King Jr., and many others. Although the book contains a few poems and fiction pieces, the majority of the readings are nonfiction. The book can be used as a handbook on research writing: it features comprehensive sections on library strategies, evaluation of evidence, documentation—including electronic sources from the Internet—and detailed guidelines for writing reports as well as persuasive papers using both MLA and APA styles. Finally, Discovering Arguments can be used as a proof-reading guide. The Concise Handbook on Grammar, Mechanics, and Usage

after the chapters can help you understand and correct the errors that plague many writers. Errors in sentence construction such as fragments; problems with punctuation, capitalization, and other “mechanics”; and usage problems such as the differences between who and whom, lie and lay, and others are explained in brief, simple language.

UNIQUE COMPONENTS OF THE BOOK

Active-Discovery Learning

The book is a balance between traditional, deductive teaching, which tells students in advance what they are to learn, and a newer, inductive approach in which students infer for themselves the underlying strategies of composition. In chapter 1, for example, we ask you to write an essay while you read the chapter instead of reading the whole chapter first and then writing your essay. “What you really learn is what you discover,” says writing teacher Ann Berthoff (9). Our goal is to help you discover and apply tools of critical thinking that will benefit you whenever you read and write.

An abundance of pedagogy provides students with a variety of ideas and skills to learn, and instructors with **a variety of materials** to teach. Because there are many ways to think, we have included several strategies to help you respond thoughtfully. Discovering Arguments contains many more activities and assignments than are usually provided in similar books.

Interchapters

The interchapters are brief presentations of matters of style and voice. The book provides an interchapter after each of the first five chapters so that learning and practice can begin early in the semester and can be sequenced to correspond with your work as you revise your own writing. You learn tools of style one at a time, discovering patterns of diction, sentences, and punctuation.

Our emphasis on the relationship between style and thought offers insights into language as an instrument of persuasion. We present a holistic view of content and style. You learn to excel at what you say as well as how you say it. At the heart of this view is a paradox: how you say something colors what you mean, and what you mean can be clarified by the way you say it. With a minimum of grammatical jargon, the interchapters help you develop an effective style while learning to communicate persuasively.

Thinking with Contraries

Contradictions, paradoxes, and other forms of reversal offer rich possibilities. Statements such as “love your enemies” or “the indirect is just as real as the direct” stimulate thought. Contraries require exploration and explanation for understanding and, therefore, make an excellent inclusion for careful thinking, reading, and writing. Contraries enable you to discover and to evaluate ideas and

information. With contraries you learn to develop a high tolerance for ambiguity and a low tolerance for either/or thinking. You learn ways to use creative thinking skills (such as humor, analogy, and empathy) to complement critical thinking skills (such as analysis, argumentation, and evaluation).

SECTION I: ARGUMENTATION

Chapter 1: Communication and Persuasion: Logos, Pathos, Ethos

Chapter 1 introduces the essential skill of observation: noticing details, examples, ideas, problems, arguments, and structures. You learn to use specific, concrete evidence to support your opinions. Chapter 1 presents the appeals of logos, pathos, and ethos used throughout the book as a unifying foundation for persuasive, argumentative writing. The chapter also offers guidelines for finding a subject, creating thesis statements in persuasive essays, and engaging an audience with effective titles, introductions, and conclusions. You learn to read actively by annotating an essay—a skill that helps to evaluate essays. The appeals not only give you tools to communicate persuasively but also to evaluate how well other writers communicate and persuade.

Interchapter 1: Style and Voice

The first interchapter introduces style and voice and related matters of diction and sentence patterns. Activities here help you use effective diction: the effects of monosyllables or multisyllables, and using specific or general, concrete or abstract, literal or figurative words. You learn the effects of precise words, natural writing, and pretentious writing; and you learn the uses of voice—the sound of your writing personality on the page. You learn about objective writing, persuasive writing, and tone—your attitudes toward audience, subject, and self. Interchapter 1 also introduces you to the use of short sentences for emphasis, joining two complete thoughts for coordination, and using semicolons.

Chapter 2: Arguments and Controversies

Chapter 2 teaches you to examine both or many sides of disputes through careful reading: by asking questions; noticing insights, assumptions, overgeneralizations; and by withholding judgments until you have considered various points of view. The chapter includes analyzing writing situations; using appeals to logos, pathos, ethos; responding to opposing arguments; and using outlining and summarizing as analytical tools. A comparison of articles by Mitch Albom and Thomas Sowell on the issue of gun control enables you to analyze and evaluate writing about a controversy and to write your own essay or letter about a controversy. You learn tools for writing a report and for writing an essay with sources. You learn

about kinds of evidence—examples, reasons, authorities, and statistics; Rogerian argument; and ways to organize argumentative papers. The chapter contains readings on gun control, abortion, gambling, creationism versus evolution, same-sex partners, hate speech and the First Amendment, and racial profiling.

Interchapter 2: Voice and Emphasis

Interchapter 2 presents additional matters of diction. You learn to use forms of repetition, such as careful alliteration to make ideas sound emphatic and clear. You learn to use subordination to join complete and incomplete thoughts; to use colons, dashes, underlining (italics), and parentheses; and to analyze the effects of punctuation on a writer's voice and persuasive ability. The interchapter presents the pros and cons of sentence fragments, and the importance of omitting needless words to fine-tune sentences.

Chapter 3: Strategies of Argumentation

Chapter 3 presents strategies writers use to discover, develop, and defend their ideas: induction, deduction, illustration, narration, description, refutation, comparison and contrast, classification, cause and effect, and definition. By analyzing and evaluating these strategies of argumentation, you learn how they complement appeals to logos, pathos, and ethos. Chapter 3 presents a simplified introduction to the Toulmin strategy of argumentation—claims, grounds, warrants—and invites you to analyze an essay using the Toulmin strategy.

Interchapter 3: Strategies of Repetition

Interchapter 3 presents sentence tools involving different kinds of repetition: parallelism (-ing phrases, -to phrases, -of phrases), anaphora, epistrophe, the power of threes in sentences, and varying sentence beginnings (-ing phrases, -ed phrases, to phrases).

Chapter 4: Thinking with Contraries

Chapter 4 teaches you to use contraries in critical ways: to notice and analyze contradictions and paradoxes, and to generate and evaluate ideas. You also learn to use contraries in creative ways: for entertainment, for explaining complex ideas or processes, and for developing empathy through imagination. The chapter invites you to write about your mind (how you think you think) and to evaluate an essay by examining its use of contraries.

Interchapter 4: Style and Contraries

Interchapter 4 presents tools of style involving contraries: loose and periodic sentences, antithesis, antithesis and balanced sentences, active and passive verbs, and fine-tuning sentences by omitting empty words (expletives).

Chapter 5: Problems in Reasoning

Chapter 5 presents a full collection of fallacies and reasoning errors, starting with differences between facts, implications, assumptions, and inferences. The fallacies are categorized as problems of insufficient evidence, problems based on irrelevant information, problems of ambiguity, and problems of faulty reasoning. The chapter contains many activities to help you analyze fallacies, and you are asked to write your own examples of fallacies. At the end of the chapter, we invite you to analyze the use of reasoning in a published essay, “How the Web Destroys the Quality of Students’ Research Papers.”

Interchapter 5: Analyzing Style

Interchapter 5 reinforces the connection between style and thought, credibility and persuasion. It presents guidelines for analyzing style and voice, a review of the tools of style in the preceding interchapters, and guidelines for organizing an essay that analyzes style. The interchapter contains a lively essay for analysis, “The Swooshification of the World” by *Sports Illustrated* columnist Rick Reilly (concerning Nike’s trademark “swoosh”) and a model student analysis of Reilly’s essay. You are asked to select an essay or a speech and to analyze how a writer’s stylistic choices reinforce content or persuasive appeals.

Chapter 6: Critical Thinking about Poetry, Fiction, Literary Nonfiction, and Film

Because poems, stories, literary essays, and films are artistic, they challenge students to think deeply. Chapter 6 engages you with these special challenges for thoughtful reading and writing. You learn to pay close attention to meaning (what is expressed) and to style (how it is expressed), as well as to make associative discoveries and to respond to felt resonances. The chapter presents concise explanations of the basic elements of each genre along with guidelines for helping you write essays analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating a text from the many selections in the chapter.

SECTION II: RESEARCH

Because persuasive writing requires finding the background and evidence for your subject, you need to become a skillful research writer. Modern library and research skills are so demanding that we have provided a full section devoted to these skills based on the guidelines of the Modern Language Association (MLA) and the American Psychological Association (APA). Building on the theme of cloning and the strategies of analysis and argumentation used throughout the book, the research section contains comprehensive chapters on library use (including virtual libraries), evaluation of evidence (especially Internet sources),

documentation, and guidelines for reports and persuasive research papers. Chapter 10 culminates in a model research paper on cloning humans.

Chapter 7: Library Strategies

Chapter 7 introduces students to two main forms of research writing: the informational report and the two-sided (or many-sided) persuasive paper. You explore research questions that matter to you. The chapter presents library work divided into strategies that help you find information from appropriate standard resources: encyclopedias, bibliographies, indexes and online electronic databases, government documents, and other kinds of specialized information. You learn to do preliminary reading, keep a research notebook, and construct a master bibliography. By guiding you through the stages of writing a research proposal, chapter 7 makes a strong connection between thoughtful planning and effective research.

Chapter 8: Evaluating Evidence

Chapter 8 helps students evaluate data. All research information—and especially information from the Internet—requires careful analysis and evaluation of content, source, author, and credibility. The chapter emphasizes the importance of determining the reliability of information. You examine the relationship between evidence and reasoning with many conventions of evaluation: primary versus secondary information, weight of evidence, Occam's Razor (the rule of simplicity), impartiality, objectivity, accuracy, and more. This chapter assists you in applying critical thinking to a research problem: "A Test Case on Cloning Humans." You can analyze several excerpts from various sources and evaluate them for application to the question, "What conclusions should a researcher draw from this evidence?"

Chapter 9: Documentation

Chapter 9 contains a full presentation of documentation rules and problems based on the latest MLA and APA guides to in-text documentation. You learn common problems of documentation: how much to document, what to document, and how to document various kinds of quotations from sources. You learn about different forms of plagiarism and how to avoid plagiarism. You learn to use in-text rules governing authors' names and titles as well as citation forms for books, periodicals, and many other sources, including those on the Internet.

Chapter 10: Writing Your Research Paper

Chapter 10 presents student models of a report (on GHB, a date-rape drug), a persuasive two-sided paper (on whether or not humans should be cloned), and guidelines for writing reports and multiple-sided papers. The chapter includes

models for formal outlines, abstracts, and various sections of a research paper (titles, introductions, presentation of evidence, conclusions), as well as guidelines for preparation of the finished paper based on both MLA and APA research guides.

The Concise Handbook on Grammar, Mechanics, and Usage functions as a condensed handbook for you to refer to when you encounter common problems with language: comma splices and run-on sentences, pronoun agreement, avoiding sexist language, subject and verb agreement, appropriate verb tenses, faulty parallelism, and misplaced modifiers. The chapter includes a collection of punctuation and mechanics guidelines and a glossary of usage.

We have written Discovering Arguments: An Introduction to Critical Thinking and Writing, with Readings to be accessible, stimulating, and useful. While you follow your instructor's assignments in this book, we encourage you to use the book recursively. For example, while you write an essay on a contradiction in chapter 4, you can return to chapter 1 to review guidelines for good titles, introductions, and conclusions. We hope you return to earlier chapters for review and jump ahead to any chapter you need—such as chapter 9 on documentation. We hope you will use the book as a ready reference tool, referring to any section you need to help you think, read, and write critically. If we have achieved our goals, you may decide to keep Discovering Arguments and use it throughout your college years and possibly beyond.

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