CHAPTER 1

Reading

SUBJECT & STRATEGY places equal emphasis on content and form—that is, on the subject of an essay and on the strategies an author uses to write it. All readers pay attention to content. Far fewer, however, notice form—the strategies authors use to organize their writing and the means they use to make it clear, logical, and effective.

When you learn to read actively and analytically, you come to appreciate the craftsmanship involved in writing—a writer’s choice of an appropriate organizational strategy or strategies and his or her use of descriptive details, representative and persuasive examples, sentence variety, and clear, appropriate, vivid diction.

The image opposite—one of a series of surreal scenes conceived by photographer Joel Robison—seems quite whimsical for the way the man has collected or encountered many books along a remote riverbank. Yet it also underscores the very real importance of selecting just one book or essay at a time for attentive study and then carefully reflecting upon what we’ve encountered.

DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE READING PROCESS

Active, analytical reading requires, first of all, that you commit time and effort to it. Second, it requires that you try to take a positive interest in what you are reading, even if the subject matter is not immediately appealing. To help you get the most out of your reading, this chapter provides guidelines for an effective reading process.

Step 1: Prepare Yourself to Read the Selection

Instead of diving right into any given selection in Subject & Strategy, you need first to establish a context for what you will be reading. What’s the essay about? What do you know about the author’s background and reputation? Where was the essay first published? Who was the intended audience? And, finally, how much do you already know about the subject of the selection?
The materials that precede each selection in this book—the title, headnote, and Preparing to Read prompt—are intended to help you establish this context. From the title you often discover the writer’s position on an issue or attitude toward the topic. The title can also give clues about the writer’s intended audience and reasons for composing the piece.

Each headnote contains four essential elements:

1. A photo of the author lets you put a face to a name.
2. The biographical note provides information about the writer’s life and work, as well as his or her reputation and authority to write on the subject.
3. The publication information for the selection that appears in the book tells you when the essay was published and where it first appeared. This information can also give you insight into the intended audience.
4. The content and rhetorical highlights of the selection preview the subject and point out key aspects of the writing strategies used by the author.

Finally, the Preparing to Read journal prompt encourages you to reflect and record your thoughts and opinions on the topic before you begin reading.

Carefully review the context-building materials on page 5 that accompany Cherokee Paul McDonald’s “A View from the Bridge” to see how they can help you establish a context for the reading. The essay itself appears on pages 8–10.

A View from the Bridge

CHEROKEE PAUL MCDONALD

A fiction writer and journalist, Cherokee Paul McDonald was raised and schooled in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. In 1970, he returned home from a tour of duty in Vietnam and joined the Fort Lauderdale Police Department, where he remained until 1980, resigning with the rank of sergeant. During this time, McDonald received a degree in criminal science from Broward Community College. He left the police department to become a writer and worked a number of odd jobs before publishing his first book, The Patch, in 1986. McDonald has said that almost all of his writing comes from his police work, and his common themes of justice, balance, and fairness reflect his life as part of the “thin blue line” (the police department). In 1991, he published Blue Truth, a memoir. His first novel, Summer’s Reason, was released in 1994. His most recent book, Into the Green: A Reconnaissance by Fire (2001), is a memoir of his three years as an artillery forward observer in Vietnam.

“A View from the Bridge” was originally published in Sunshine, a monthly magazine filled with uplifting short articles and stories, in 1990. The essay shows McDonald’s usual expert handling of fish and fishermen, both in and out of water, and reminds us that things are not always as they seem. Notice his selective use of details to describe the young fisherman and the fish he has hooked on his line.

Preparing to Read

The great American philosopher and naturalist Henry David Thoreau has written: “The question is not what you look at, but what you see.” We’ve all had the experience of becoming numb to sights or experiences that once struck us with wonderment; but sometimes, with luck, something happens to renew our appreciation. Think of an example from your own experience. What are some ways we can retain or recover our appreciation of the remarkable things we have come to take for granted?
From reading these preliminary materials, what expectations do you have for “A View from the Bridge”? While McDonald’s title does not give any specific indication of his topic, it does suggest that he will be writing about the view from a particular bridge and that what he sees is worth sharing with his readers. The biographical note reveals that McDonald, a Vietnam veteran and former policeman, is a fiction writer and journalist. The titles of his books suggest that much of his writing comes from his military and police work, where he developed important observational skills and sensitivity to people and the environment. From the publication information for the selection, you learn that the essay first appeared in 1990 in Sunshine, a monthly magazine with short, uplifting human-interest articles for a general readership. The content and rhetorical highlights advise you to look at how McDonald’s knowledge about fish and fishing and his use of descriptive details help him paint a verbal picture of the young fisherman and the battle he has with the fish on his line. Finally, the journal prompt asks for your thoughts on why we become numb to experiences that once awed us. What, for you, is the difference between to “look at” and to “see,” and how can we preserve our appreciation for the awesome things that we sometimes take for granted? After reading McDonald’s essay, you can compare your reflections on “seeing” with what McDonald learned from his own experience with the boy who fished by the bridge.

Step 2: Read the Selection

Always read the selection at least twice, no matter how long it is. The first reading lets you get acquainted with the essay and get an overall sense of what the writer is saying, and why. As you read, you may find yourself modifying the sense of the writer’s message and purpose that you derived from the title, headnote, and your response to the writing prompt. Circle words you do not recognize so that you can look them up in a dictionary. Put a question mark alongside any passages that are not immediately clear. However, you will probably want to delay most of your annotating until a second reading so that your first reading can be fast, enabling you to concentrate on the larger issues of message and purpose.

Step 3: Reread the Selection

Your second reading should be quite different from your first. You will know what the essay is about, where it is going, and how it gets there; now you can relate the individual parts of the essay more accurately to the whole. Use your second reading to test your first impressions, developing and deepening your sense of how (and how well) the essay is written. Because you now have a general understanding of the essay, you can pay special attention to the author’s purpose and means of achieving it. You can look for strategies of organization (see pages 31–32) and style and adapt them to your own work.

Step 4: Annotate the Selection

When you annotate a selection you should do more than simply underline what you think are important points. It is easy to underline so much that the notations become almost meaningless, and it’s common to forget why you underlined passages in the first place; if that’s all you do. Instead, as you read, write down your thoughts in the margins or on a separate piece of paper. Mark the selection’s main point when you find it stated directly. Look for the strategy or strategies the author uses to explore and support that point, and jot this information down. If you disagree with a statement or conclusion, object in the margin: “No!” If you feel skeptical, write “Why?” or “Explain.” If you are impressed by an argument or turn of phrase, write “Good point!” Place vertical lines or a star in the margin to indicate especially important points.

What to Annotate in a Text

Here are some examples of what you may want to mark in a selection as you read:

- Memorable statements or important points
- Key terms or concepts
- Central issues or themes
- Examples that support a major point
- Unfamiliar words
- Questions you have about a point or passage
- Your responses to a specific point or passage

Remember that there are no hard-and-fast rules for annotating elements. Choose a method of annotation that will make sense to you when you go back to recollect your thoughts and responses to the essay. Jot down whatever marginal notes come naturally to you. Most readers combine brief written responses with underlining, circling, highlighting, stars, or question marks.

Above all, don’t let annotating become burdensome. A word or phrase is usually as good as a sentence. One helpful way to focus your annotations is to ask yourself questions such as those on page 11 while reading the selection a second time.
I was coming up on the little bridge in the Rio Vista neighborhood of Fort Lauderdale, deepening my stride and my breathing to negotiate the slight incline without altering my pace. And then, as I neared the crest, I saw the kid.

He was a lumpy little guy with baggy shorts, a faded T-shirt and heavy sweat socks falling down over old sneakers.

Partially covering his shaggy blond hair was one of those blue baseball caps with gold braid on the bill and a sailfish patch sewn onto the peak. Covering his eyes and part of his face was a pair of those stupid-looking '50s-style wrap-around sunglasses.

He was fumbling with a beat-up rod and reel, and he had a little bait bucket by his feet. I puffed on by, glancing down into the empty bucket as I passed.

“Hey, mister! Would you help me, please?”

The shrill voice penetrated my jogger’s concentration, partially covering his shaggy blond hair was one of those 30s-style wrap-around sunglasses.

Exasperated, I walked slowly back to the kid, and pointed.

“There’s the damn shrimp by your left foot. You stopped me for that?”

As I said it, the kid reached down and trapped the shrimp.

“I watched as the kid dropped the baited hook down into the canal. Then I turned to start back down the bridge.

That’s when the kid let out a “Hey! Hey!” and the prettiest tarpon I’d ever seen came almost six feet out of the water, twisting and turning as he fell through the air.

“I got one!” the kid yelled as the fish hit the water with a loud splash and took off down the canal.

I watched the line being burned off the reel at an alarming rate. The kid’s left hand held the crank while the extended fingers felt for the drag setting.

“Hey! Hey!” the kid yelled again. The fish turned around and started swimming in circles. I watched as the kid kept the rod tip up and the line tight.

As the fish came to the surface and began a slow circle in the middle of the canal, I said, “Whoa, is that a nice fish or what?”

The kid didn’t say anything, so I said, “Okay, move to the edge of the bridge and I’ll climb down to the seawall and pull him out.”

When I reached the seawall I pulled in the leader, leaving the fish lying on its side in the water.

“How’s that?” I said.

“Hey, mister, tell me what it looks like.”

“Look down here and check him out,” I said, “He’s beautiful.”

But then I looked up into those stupid-looking sunglasses and hit me. The kid was blind.

“Could you tell me what he looks like, mister?” he said again.

“Well, he’s just under three, uh, he’s about as long as one of your arms,” I said. “I’d guess he goes about 15, 20 pounds. He’s mostly silver, but the silver is somehow made up of all the colors, if you know what I mean.” I stopped. “Do you know what I mean by colors?”

The kid nodded.

“Oh, he has all these big scales, like armor all over his body. They’re silver too, and when he moves they sparkle. He
has a strong body and a large powerful tail. He has big round eyes, bigger than a quarter, and a lower jaw that sticks out past the upper one and is very tough. His belly is almost white and his back is a gunmetal gray. When he jumped he came out of the water about six feet, and his scales caught the sun and flashed it all over the place.

By now the fish had righted itself, and I could see the bright-red gills as the gill plates opened and closed. I explained this to the kid, and then said, more to myself, "He's a beauty."

"Can you get him off the hook?" the kid asked. "I don't want to kill him."

I watched as the tarpon began to slowly swim away, tired but still alive.

By the time I got back up to the top of the bridge the kid had his line secured and his bait bucket in one hand.

He grinned and said, "Just in time. My mom drops me off here, and she'll be back to pick me up any minute."

He used the back of one hand to wipe his nose.

"Thanks for helping me catch that tarpon," he said, "and for helping me to see it."

I looked at him, shook my head, and said, "No, my friend, thank you for letting me see that fish."

I took off, but before I got far the kid yelled again.

"Hey, mister!"

I stopped.

"Someday I'm gonna catch a sailfish and a blue marlin and a giant tuna and all those big sportfish!"

As I looked into those sunglasses I knew he probably would. I wished I could be there when it happened.

Now that you have learned what you should do to prepare yourself to read a selection, what you should look for during a first reading and during a second reading, and what you should annotate, it is time to move on to the next step: analyzing a text by asking yourself questions as you reread it.

Step 5: Analyze and Evaluate the Selection

As you continue to study the selection, analyze it for a deeper understanding and appreciation of the author's craft and try to evaluate its overall effectiveness as a piece of writing. Here are some questions you may find helpful as you start the process:

Questions for Analysis and Evaluation

1. What is the writer's topic?
2. What is the writer's main point or thesis?
3. What is the writer's purpose in writing?
4. What strategy or strategies does the writer use? Where and how does the writer use them?
5. Do the writer's strategies suit his or her subject and purpose? Why, or why not?
6. How effective is the essay? Does the writer make his or her points clear and persuade the reader to accept them?

Each essay in Subject & Strategy is followed by study questions similar to these but specific to the essay. Some of the questions help you analyze the content of an essay, while others help you analyze the writer's use of the rhetorical strategies. In addition, there are questions about the writer's diction and style. As you read the essay a second time, look for details related to these questions, and then answer the questions as fully as you can.

THE READING PROCESS IN ACTION:
THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN'S "MY FAVORITE TEACHER"

To give you practice using the five-step reading process that we have just explored, we present an essay by Thomas L. Friedman, including the headnote material and the Preparing to Read prompt. Before you read Friedman's essay, think about the title, the biographical and rhetorical information in the headnote, and the Preparing to Read prompt. Make some notes of your expectations about the essay and write out a response to the prompt. Next, continue following the five-step process outlined in this chapter. As you read the essay for the first time, try not to stop; take it all in as if in one breath. The second time through, pause to annotate the text. Finally, using the questions listed above, analyze and evaluate the essay.
My Favorite Teacher

THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN


In the following essay, which first appeared in the New York Times on January 9, 2001, Friedman pays tribute to his tenth-grade journalism teacher. As you read Friedman's profile of Hattie M. Steinberg, note the descriptive detail he selects to create the dominant impression of "a woman of clarity in an age of uncertainty."

Preparring to Read

If you had to name your three favorite teachers of all time, who would they be? Why do you consider each one a favorite? Which one, if any, are you likely to remember twenty-five years from now? Why?

Last Sunday's *New York Times Magazine* published its annual review of people who died last year who left a particular mark on the world. I am sure all readers have their own such list. I certainly do. Indeed, someone who made the most important difference in my life died last year—my high school journalism teacher, Hattie M. Steinberg.

I grew up in a small suburb of Minneapolis, and Hattie was the legendary journalism teacher at St. Louis Park High School, Room 313. I took her intro to journalism course in 10th grade, back in 1969, and have never needed, or taken, another course in journalism since. She was that good.

Hattie was a woman who believed that the secret for success in life was getting the fundamentals right. And boy, she pounded the fundamentals of journalism into her students—not simply how to write a lead or accurately transcribe a quote, but, more important, how to comport yourself in a professional way and to always do quality work. To this day, when I forget to wear a tie on assignment, I think of Hattie scolding me. I once interviewed an ad exec for our high school paper who used a four-letter word. We debated whether to run it. Hattie rules yes. That ad man almost lost his job when it appeared. She wanted to teach us about consequences.

Hattie was the toughest teacher I ever had. After you took her journalism course in 10th grade, you tried out for the paper, *The Echo*, which she supervised. Competition was fierce. In 11th grade, I didn't quite come up to her writing standards, so she made me business manager, selling ads to the local pizza parlors. That year, though, she let me write one story. It was about an Israeli general who had been a hero in the Six-Day War, who was giving a lecture at the University of Minnesota. I covered his lecture and interviewed him briefly. His name was Ariel Sharon. First story I ever got published.

Those of us on the paper, and the yearbook that she also supervised, lived in Hattie's classroom. We hung out there before and after school. Now, you have to understand, Hattie was a single woman, nearing sixty at the time, and this was the 1960s. She was the polar opposite of "cool," but we hung around her classroom like it was a malt shop and she was Wolfman Jack. None of us could have articulated it then, but it was because we enjoyed being harangued by her, disciplined by her, and taught by her. She was a woman of clarity in an age of uncertainty.

We remained friends for thirty years, and she followed, bragged about, and critiqued every twist in my career. After she died, her friends sent me a pile of my stories that she had saved over the years. Indeed, her students were her family—only closer. Judy Harrington, one of Hattie's former students, remarked about other friends who were on Hattie's newspapers and yearbooks: "We all graduated forty-one years ago; and yet nearly each day in our lives something comes up—some mental image, some admonition that makes us think of Hattie."

Judy also told the story of one of Hattie's last birthday parties, when one man said he had to leave early to take his daughter somewhere. "Sit down," said Hattie. "You're not leaving yet. She can just be a little late."

That was my teacher! I sit up straight just thinking about her.

Among the fundamentals Hattie introduced me to was the *New York Times*. Every morning it was delivered to Room 313. I had never seen it before then. Real journalists, she taught us, start their day by reading the *Times* and columnists like Anthony Lewis and James Reston.

I have been thinking about Hattie a lot this year, not just because she died on July 31, but because the lessons she imparted seem so relevant.
now. We’ve just gone through this huge dot-com-Internet-globalization bubble—during which a lot of smart people got carried away and forgot the fundamentals of how you build a profitable company, a lasting portfolio, a nation state, or a thriving student. It turns out that the real secret of success in the information age is what it always was: fundamentals—reading, writing, and arithmetic; church, synagogue, and mosque; the rule of law and good governance.

The Internet can make you smarter, but it can’t make you smart. It can extend your reach, but it will never tell you what to say at a P.T.A. meeting. These fundamentals cannot be downloaded. You can only upload them, the old-fashioned way, one by one, in places like Room 313 at St. Louis Park High. I only regret that I didn’t write this column when the woman who taught me all that was still alive.

Once you have read and reread Friedman’s essay, write your own answers to the six basic questions listed on page 11. Then compare your answers with those that follow.

1. What is the writer’s topic?
Friedman’s topic is his high school journalism teacher, Hattie M. Steinberg; more broadly, his topic is the “secret for success in life,” as taught to him by Steinberg.

2. What is the writer’s main point or thesis?
Friedman writes about Steinberg because she was “someone who made the most important difference in my life” (paragraph 1). His main point seems to be that “Hattie was a woman who believed that the secret for success in life was getting the fundamentals right” (3). Friedman learned this from Hattie and applied it to his own life. He firmly believes that “the real secret of success in the information age is what it always was: fundamentals” (10).

3. What is the writer’s purpose in writing?
Friedman’s purpose is to memorialize Steinberg and to explain the importance of the fundamentals that she taught him more than forty years ago. He wants his readers to realize that there are no shortcuts or quick fixes on the road to success. Without the fundamentals, success often eludes people.

4. What strategy or strategies does the writer use? Where and how does the writer use them?
Overall, Friedman uses the strategy of illustration, fleshing out his profile of Steinberg with specific examples of the fundamentals she instilled in her students (paragraphs 3 and 9). Friedman uses description as well to develop his profile of Steinberg. We learn that she was Friedman’s “toughest teacher” (4), that she was “a single woman, nearing sixty at the time,” that she was “the polar opposite of ‘cool,’” and that she was “a woman of clarity in an age of uncertainty” (5). Finally, Friedman’s brief narratives about Steinberg’s story, or writing narration, so much as he was showing what a great teacher she was. Using examples of how Steinberg affected his life and molded his journalistic skills allows Friedman to introduce his teacher as well as to demonstrate her importance.

In developing his portrait of Steinberg in this way, Friedman relies on the fundamentals of good journalism. When taken collectively, his examples create a poignant picture of this teacher. Steinberg would likely have been proud to see her former student demonstrating his journalistic skills in paying tribute to her.

5. Do the writer’s strategies suit his subject and purpose? Why, or why not?
Friedman uses exemplification as a strategy to show why Steinberg had such a great impact on his life. Friedman knew that he was not telling Steinberg’s story, or writing narration, so much as he was showing what a great teacher she was. Using examples of how Steinberg affected his life and molded his journalistic skills allows Friedman to introduce his teacher as well as to demonstrate her importance.

6. How effective is the essay? Does the writer make his points clear and persuade the reader to accept them?
Friedman’s essay serves his purpose extremely well. He helps his readers visualize Steinberg and understand what she gave to each of her journalism students. In his concluding two paragraphs, Friedman shows us that Steinberg’s message is as relevant today as it was more than forty years ago in St. Louis Park High School, Room 313.

ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPHS AND VISUAL TEXTS IN THIS BOOK

Subject & Strategy has a visual dimension to complement the many verbal texts. Each chapter opens with a visual text that provides insight into the chapter’s writing strategy. In addition, we have illustrated at least one essay in each chapter with a photograph that captures one or more themes in the essay. Finally, we have included an assortment of visual texts in the Classroom Activities that accompany each essay in Subject & Strategy. It is our hope that, by adding this visual medium to the mix of written essays and text-based analytical activities and assignments, we can demonstrate not only another approach to themes and strategies but also how a different medium portrays these themes and strategies.

There’s nothing unnatural or wrong about looking at a photograph and naming its subject or giving it a label. For example, summarizing the
content of the photograph on page 17 is easy enough. We’d simply say, “Here’s a photograph of a man sitting in front of a store.”

The problem comes when we mistake looking for seeing. If we think we are seeing and truly perceiving but are only looking, we miss a lot. Our visual sense can become uncritical and nonchalant, perhaps even numbed to what’s going on in a photograph.

To reap the larger rewards, we need to move in more closely on an image. If we take a closer look, we will see all kinds of important details that we perhaps missed the first time around. We see elements in harmony as well as conflict. We see comparisons and contrasts. We see storytelling. We see process and change. We see highlights and shadows, foreground and background, light and dark, and a myriad of shades in between. There is movement—even in still photographs. There is tension and energy, peace and harmony, and line and texture. We see all this because we are seeing and not merely looking.

If we examine the photograph of the man again and truly see it, we might observe the following:

1. A man sits on a ledge that is low to the ground. He is likely traveling since he has two bags, one of which is so heavy that a wheeled cart is useful. Behind him is a store-window display with mannequins posed in various positions.

2. A casual observer might think the scene is in a mall, but closer observation reveals that the ledge is alongside an outdoor sidewalk. The glass of the store window reflects the activity of a busy urban street. We see the side of a bus and a set of handlebars reflected there. The man holds a cigarette in his right hand, evidence that he is outside.

3. The light square tiles of the sidewalk contrast with the round-edged, glossy dark ledge.

4. The man is not particularly meticulous about his appearance, unbothered by the street potentially dirtying his clothes. His white shirt is unbuttoned and rumpled. His athletic sneakers, loose-fitting camouflage jacket, and baseball cap suggest that he prioritizes comfort over style. The shadow on his cap indicates flexible, broken-in fabric. He may wear the hat often.

5. The man stares blankly ahead, uninterested in the goings-on outside the photograph. If he tried to observe the area in front of him, the cart’s handle would obscure his view. His posture is rounded, and his arms rest on his knees. He seems tired. Perhaps it’s late in the day or, if he has been traveling, it’s been a complicated journey.

6. In contrast to the man’s appearance and manner, the front-window display is formal and fashionable. We see decorative plant fronds in an ornate holder. Luxurious, fringed blankets and jacquard pillows rest on

7. It’s clear that the store carries upscale women’s clothes and home furnishings. The clean, litter-free street suggests that the store may be in a well-kept area, perhaps catering to upscale shoppers.
8. The fact that both the mannequin and the man wear light, open jackets suggests a temperate, cool time of year. If we were to zoom on the window’s text placard, we would see Chinese characters, suggesting that this takes place in a Chinese city.

9. The most striking thing about the photograph is the juxtaposition of the weary, casually dressed man with the formal and upscale mannequins in the store window. The man seems content to sit and smoke his cigarette, showing little interest in his surroundings. One wonders why he selected that particular spot.

Based on these detailed observations, we can begin to identify a number of themes at work in the photo: class and lifestyle differences, cultural contradictions, and the clash between concepts like work and leisure. Likewise, we can see that several rhetorical strategies are at work: comparison and contrast predominantly, but also description and illustration.

Photographs are not the only visual texts that we encounter in our daily lives. Both in print and on the Internet, governments, organizations, and individuals present us with visual information in graphs, diagrams, flow charts, and ads. Consider the following graphic, which appeared in the *Wall Street Journal* in October 2012. Between July and September 2012, Kaplan Test Prep surveyed admissions officers from 350 of the top 500 colleges as ranked by U.S. News & World Report’s *Ultimate College Guide* and Barron’s *Profiles of American Colleges*. Admissions officers were asked whether or not they had searched online for information about an applicant and whether results had ever negatively affected an applicant’s chance at admission.

Before looking at their responses, ask yourself if you ever considered that college admissions officers might check you out online during the application process. Now study the graphic.

What were you able to see communicated in this graphic? Here is what we observed:

1. The answers to the questions are presented in the form of three donut charts, which show the relationship of parts to the whole, much like a pie chart.
2. Each donut is divided between two possible response options: “yes” and “no.”
3. The shaded portion of each donut represents the percentage of respondents who answered “yes.”
4. In each case, more than half of the respondents replied “no,” suggesting that although a significant number of admissions officers have searched for information about applicants online, it’s not yet a majority practice.
5. The difference between searching on Google or on social media is a mere one-percentage point, so an observer might generalize that each is “roughly a quarter of admissions officers.”
6. From the answers to the first two options, it’s not clear how many of the admissions officers used both Google and social media, and how many used just one or the other.
7. Because 35 percent of admissions officers reported that they have uncovered information that negatively affected an applicant, we can conclude the total number of admissions officers who have ever checked an applicant’s online presence is, in fact, higher than a quarter after all.

A similar close analysis of the other visuals in this book will enhance your understanding of how themes and strategies work in these visual texts. Practice in visual analysis will, in turn, add to your understanding of the reading selections. In reading, too, we need to train ourselves to pay close attention to catch all nuances and to be attuned to what is not expressed as well as to what is. By sharpening our observational skills, we penetrate to another level of meaning—a level not apparent to a casual reader. Finally, strengthening your ability to see and read deeply will also strengthen your ability to write. We need to see first, clearly and in detail, before we attempt, as writers, to find the appropriate words to help others see.

**THE READING-WRITING CONNECTION**

Reading and writing are two sides of the same coin. Active reading is one of the best ways to learn to write and to improve writing skills. By reading we can see how others have communicated their experiences, ideas, thoughts, and feelings in their writing. We can study how they have
effectively used the various elements of the essay—thesis, organizational strategies, beginnings and endings, paragraphs, transitions, effective sentences, word choice, tone, and figurative language—to say what they wanted to say. By studying the style, technique, and rhetorical strategies of other writers—by reading, in effect, as writers—we learn how to write more effectively ourselves.

**Reading as a Writer**

What does it mean to read as a writer? Most of us have not been taught to read with a writer's eye, to ask why we like one piece of writing and not another. Likewise, most of us do not ask ourselves why one piece of writing is more believable or convincing than another. When you learn to read with a writer's eye, you begin to answer these important questions and, in the process, come to appreciate what is involved in selecting a subject.

At one level, reading stimulates your imagination by providing you with ideas on what to write about. After reading Thomas L. Friedman's “My Favorite Teacher,” Malcolm X's “Coming to an Awareness of Language,” David P. Bardeen's “Not Close Enough for Comfort,” or Jeannette Walls's “A Woman on the Street,” you might decide to write about a turning point in your life. Or, after reading Pat Mora's “Remembering Lobo,” Maya Angelou's “Sister Flowers,” or Robert Ramirez's “The Barrio,” you might be inspired to write about a person or place of similar personal significance to you.

Reading also provides you with information, ideas, and perspectives that can serve as jumping-off points for your own essays. For example, after reading Rosalind Wiseman's “The Queen Bee and Her Court,” you might want to elaborate on what she has written, agreeing with her examples or generating better ones; qualify her argument or take issue with it; or use a variation of her classification scheme to discuss male relationships (i.e., "The King and His Court"). Similarly, if you wanted to write an essay in which you take a stand on an issue, you would find the essays on various controversies in the “Argumentation” chapter an invaluable resource.

Reading actively and analytically will also help you recognize effective writing and learn to emulate it. When you see, for example, how Deborah Tannen uses a strong thesis statement about the value of directness and indirectness in human communication to control the parts of her essay (“How to Give Orders Like a Man”), you can better appreciate the importance of having a clear thesis statement in your writing. When you see the way Andrew Sullivan ("iPod World: The End of Society?") uses transitions to link key phrases and important ideas so that readers can recognize how the parts of his essay are meant to flow together, you have a better idea of how to achieve such coherence in your writing. And when you see how Suzanne Britt ("Neat People vs. Sloppy People") uses a point-by-point organizational pattern to show the differences between neat and sloppy people, you see a powerful way in which you can organize an essay using the strategy of comparison and contrast.

Perhaps the most important reason to master the skill of reading like a writer is that, for everything you write, you will be your own first reader. How well you scrutinize your own drafts will affect how well you revise them, and revising well is crucial to writing well.