

ANALYZING THE AUTHOR'S PURPOSE AND TECHNIQUE

The writer's overall purpose determines the techniques he or she uses. The writer's reason for writing a particular article or book may be manipulative, as in propaganda or advertising, or may be more straightforward, as in informative writing. In either case, understanding the writer's underlying purpose will help you interpret the context of the writing. It will also help you see why writers make the decisions they do—from the largest decisions about what information to present to the smallest details of what words to use. The chapter concludes with instructions on how to write an analysis of purpose and technique. This kind of rhetorical analysis will provide the perspective required to keep you from being pushed by words in directions you don't want to go.

The Writer's Purpose

Insofar as people know what they are doing, they plan their actions to achieve their purposes. Someone who selects the purpose of being rich will design and carry out a set of actions, legal or illegal, to gain the desired wealth. A person who wants to gain great wisdom will design an entirely different life course. Writers, whether they want most to be wealthy or wise, have specific purposes they hope to achieve by any piece of work. If they are skilled writers—that is, in control of what they write—they design each aspect of what they are writing to achieve their purpose.

Being aware of the writer's purpose when you read helps you evaluate how well the writer has achieved the purpose and decide whether you want to follow where the writer is trying to lead you. The active reader reads more than the words and more than even the ideas: *the active reader reads what the writer is doing*. The active reader reconstructs the overall design, both the writer's purpose and the techniques used to realize that purpose.

In this chapter, we initially consider the various purposes a writer may have and the ways in which a reader can discern that purpose. Next we discuss the various techniques available to writers and in a case study look at several examples of how technique is related to purpose. The chapter ends with specific instructions on how to write an *essay analyzing purpose and technique*.

The Ad Writer's Purpose

Living as we do in a consumerist and merchandising society, we are all sensitive to the designs of advertising. We know the purpose of most advertisements is to get us to open up our wallets and surrender their contents willingly and even enthusiastically. We are also intellectually aware of most of the techniques that advertisers use to entice us: emotionally charged language, vivid art, attractive models, appeals to our fantasies and our fears.

Nike, a manufacturer of athletic shoes and sportswear, for example, has used ad campaigns on television and in print media to encourage us to buy the newest, most high-tech, most fashionable sneakers on the market. How can advertising make us purchase an eighty-dollar pair of high-top basketball shoes when we don't even play basketball? By making us *feel* we need them. Advertising tries to convince us that wearing Nike products will make us happy people. The advertising would have us associate positive emotions springing from health and physical fitness with Nike products and feel guilty for being lazy, eating junk food, and talking about turning over a new leaf tomorrow.

One particular Nike advertising campaign, built around the slogan “JUST DO IT,” attempts to challenge us to get off the sofa, put down the television remote control, and exercise regularly—and then to associate our feelings of accomplishment and pride with Nike athletic shoes. The slogan suggests that readers will be exchanging bad habits for good ones when they buy a new pair of shoes. Of course, readers must do something to accomplish all this: in order to “just do it” (stop being lazy and start exercising), they first have to buy a pair of Nikes. The slogan also implies (perhaps legitimately) that consumers have something to gain (at the very least, a fashionable new pair of shoes; at the most, better health) and nothing to lose (not exactly true—the shoes are costly).

The two-page spread originally appeared in a weekly magazine targeting African Americans in the business world. Like most of Nike's print ads, this one targets a specific audience: educated, professional African-American males. By repeating the “JUST DO IT” slogan while challenging potential consumers to achieve in every facet of experience, the company is insisting that wearing Nike shoes is a sign of success not just on the basketball Court, but in the game of life. The visual

impact of the ad is created by the contrast between light and dark in a wide-angle photograph of a dimly lit alley. The only light appears in the distant figure dressed in a white sweat suit, shooting hoops on an outdoor basketball court; in the white lettering of the printed copy running down the right side of the right-hand page; and in the Nike logo in the top left corner of the left-hand page. The lone athlete, the white lettering, and the Nike logo stand out and “rise above” an obscure environment—challenging the potential consumer to do likewise. The narrative itself reinforces and clarifies the message. The first seven lines list the nicknames of athletes who succeeded in sports but not in life, because they didn't know they had “all the tools.” The twelfth line, “Fortunately, you do,” contrasts these men with the reader directly. The rest of the narrative challenges him to use the tools available to excel in all aspects of life: “Go back to school. Start a business. Coach little league. Vote. JUST DO IT...” The reader could bike to work, get his blood pressure checked, visit Africa, and run for public office without wearing Nike athletic shoes, but the fact that Nike is issuing the challenges—emphasized by repetition of the Nike slogan—suggests that the company cares about much more than physical fitness. This ad underplays its “Buy shoes” message and instead subtly invites the reader to associate positive images and ideas with the company that produces the shoes. The ad's final two lines restate the contrasts presented in the visual and narrative elements and emphasize the seriousness of the manufacturer's message: “Remember. It's a must win situation.”

Since this advertisement in the Nike campaign appeals to both the desires and the fears of its target audience, it does not need to provide a direct sell. Instead, through vivid visual imagery and evocative language, the designers of the ad attempt to equate a product with self-improvement and overall success. Neither the word *shoe* nor a close-up photograph of the product appears in the ad. The company name and logo appear only once, in small letters in one corner; neither appears in the printed copy of the ad. Because of the number and frequency of ads in the campaign, most potential consumers know what this particular ad is about. Emphasizing the product or the company is unnecessary; the “JUST DO IT” slogan is synonymous with the company name; and just about everyone knows what Nike produces.

Federal regulations outlaw advertising claims that are outright deceptions; and some advertisements are designed to be merely informative, to just let us know that a product with specific features is available on the market. Even Nike has designed ads with this intent: for example, the series of ads promoting the “Air Jordan” basketball shoe, with a pump, claimed to provide adequate arch support and decrease impact stress. Nonetheless, even the plainest advertisements emphasize certain of the consumers' needs and attitudes at the expense of others. Most advertisements try to distract us from a simple, rational consideration of what we need and what we actually receive in return when we purchase particular products. Even the techniques of amusement—if we laugh at the advertisement, we will remember the product and buy it—lead us away from analyzing the value we receive in exchange for our money.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

Discuss how the copywriters and art directors of the two advertisements on pages 195-196 have created both text and art that they think will make consumers want to respond in certain ways. What group of people does each advertisement address, and how does each appeal to its particular audience? Do the ads have features that would appeal to consumers of a particular race, sex, or age group? How is each advertisement designed to generate a particular action from its designated readership? How well do you feel each fulfills its purpose? How do the differences in audience and purpose account for differences in the presentation of each advertisement? Find other magazine or newspaper advertisements for discussion.

The Propagandist's Purpose

Propaganda, like advertising, aims to make us forget reason. Propaganda may serve to further political ambitions, to drum up support for questionable governmental policies, or to confuse political discussions by deflecting attention from the real issues.

In the early 1950s, Senator Joseph McCarthy relied heavily on propaganda to advance his own career and to create extreme anti-Communist fear and hysteria. In the following excerpt from a speech he delivered in the Senate on July 6, 1950, McCarthy turns his apparent support of President Harry S Truman's decision to send United States troops to Korea into an attack on supposed Communist sympathizers in Washington.

Mr. President, at this very moment GIs are consecrating the hills and the valleys of Korea with American blood. But all that blood is not staining the Korean hills and valleys. Some of it is deeply and permanently staining the hands of Washington politicians.

Some men of little minds and less morals are today using the Korean war as a profitable political diversion, a vehicle by which to build up battered reputations because of incompetence and worse. The American people have long condemned war profiteers who promptly crowd the landscape the moment their Nation is at war. Today, Mr. President, war profiteers of a new and infinitely more debased type are cluttering the landscape in Washington. They are political war profiteers. Today they are going all-out in an effort to sell the American people the idea that in order to successfully fight communism abroad, we must give Communists and traitors at home complete unmolested freedom of action. They are hiding behind the word "unity," using it without meaning, but as a mere catch phrase to center the attention of the American people solely on the fighting front. They argue that if we expose Communists, fellow travelers, and traitors in our Government, that somehow this will injure our war effort. Actually, anyone who can add two and two must realize that if our war effort is to be successful, we must redouble our efforts to get rid of those who, either because of incompetence or because of loyalty to the Communist philosophy, have laid the groundwork and paved the way for disaster.

The pattern will become clearer as the casualty lists mount. Anyone who criticizes the murderous incompetence of those who are responsible for this disaster, anyone who places the finger upon dupes and traitors in Washington, because of whose acts young men are already dying, will be guilty of creating disunity.

Already this cry has reached fantastic pinnacles of moronic thinking. Take, for example, the local *Daily Worker*, that is, the *Washington Post*. The other day this newspaper ran an editorial in effect accusing the University of California of injuring the war effort by discharging 137 teachers and other employees who refused to certify that they were not members of the Communist International conspiracy. This, Mr. President, would be laughable if it came merely from the Communist Party's mouthpiece, the *New York Daily Worker*, and its mockingbirds like the *Washington Post*. Unfortunately, a few of the Nation's respectable but misguided writers are being sold this same bill of goods, namely, that to have unity in our military effort the truth about Communists at home must be suppressed.

McCarthy begins by *flag waving*; that is, by playing on strong national feeling. By praising American soldiers, he makes himself appear patriotic with only the interests of his country at heart. He also arouses in his listeners patriotic feeling in support of the self-sacrificing GIs. But in the second sentence, he turns this patriotic feeling against Washington politicians. McCarthy starts *name calling*, which he continues throughout the speech. With no detailed evidence or other support, he labels certain unidentified members of the government as incompetents, Communists, dupes, and traitors. He repeats these labels throughout his attack, but he never becomes specific about who these traitors are, what their exact crimes are, and what his evidence is. Thus he makes only *blanket accusations* that cannot be pinpointed and therefore cannot be proved or disproved.

Guilt by Association As part of his labeling, McCarthy employs *guilt by association*: he associates members of the government with war profiteers who had been the object of public hatred for many years. Similarly, he associates the *Washington Post*, an independent newspaper, with the *Daily Worker*, the official newspaper of the Communist party.

Finally, the whole excerpt relies on *scapegoating*, putting the blame on those who are not truly responsible. If American soldiers are dying and if casualty lists are mounting, McCarthy wants to make it appear that the fault belongs to our government officials and newspapers—especially those that McCarthy does not like. Rather than saying it is the North Korean army killing our soldiers, McCarthy puts bloodstains on “the hands of Washington politicians.”

Unfortunately, propaganda is sometimes very effective, particularly at times of crisis when emotions run high. Playing on the Korean War and Soviet expansion in Eastern Europe, McCarthy temporarily gained substantial power and created a climate of terror in this country, a climate that took many years to dispel.

Campaign Speeches

Not all propaganda strategies are as obvious as those McCarthy used. In fact, most propaganda is much more subtle and difficult to detect, and this is particularly true of propaganda used during elections. The 1992 presidential campaign was no exception. In an unusual three-way race, all the candidates—the incumbent, President George Bush; the Democratic challenger, Bill Clinton; and the independent candidate, Ross Perot—relied on propaganda to court potential voters. Following are the candidates' closing statements from the second of three presidential debates televised during the month before the election. Notice how in his closing statement, each candidate uses a variety of propaganda strategies to appeal to the electorate.

Closing Statements

BUSH. Let me just say to the American people in, in two and a half weeks we're going to choose who should sit in this Oval Office. Who to lead the economic recovery, who to be the leader of the free world, who to get the deficit down.

Three ways to do that: One is to raise taxes; one is to reduce spending, controlling that mandatory spending; another one is to invest and save and to stimulate growth.

I do not want to raise taxes. I differ with the two here on that. I'm just not going to do that. I do believe that we need to control mandatory spending. I think we need to invest and save more. I believe that we need to educate better and retrain better. I believe that we need to export more, so I'll keep working for export agreements where we can sell more abroad. And I believe that we must strengthen the family. We've got to strengthen the family.

Now let me pose this question to America: If in the next five minutes, a television announcer came on and said there is a major international crisis—there is a major threat to the world or in this country—a major threat. My question is: Who, if you were appointed to name one of the three of us, who would you choose? Who has the perseverance, the character, the integrity, the maturity to get the job done? I hope I'm that person. Thank you very, very much.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. And now, a closing statement from Mr. Perot.

PEROT. If the American people want to do it and not talk about it, then, they ought—you know, I'm not person they ought to consider. If they just want to keep slow-dancing and talk about it, and not do it, I'm not your man. I am results-oriented, I am action-oriented. I've built my businesses. Getting things done in three months what my competitors took 18 months to

do. Everybody says you can't do that in Congress; sure you can do that with Congress. Congress is—they're all good people. They're all patriots. But you've got to link arms and work with them. Sure, you'll have arguments; sure, you'll have fights. We have them all day, every day. But we get the job done.

I have to come back in my close to one thing, because I am passionate about education. I was talking about early childhood education for disadvantaged low-income children. And let me tell you one specific pilot program, where children who don't have, chance go to this program when they're three and now we're going back to when the mother's pregnant. They'll start right after they're born. But going-starting when they're three and going to this school until they're nine, and then going into the public schools in the fourth grade? Ninety percent are on the honor roll. Now, that will change America. Those children will all go to college. They will live the American dream.

And I beg the American people, any time they think about reforming education, to take this piece of society that doesn't have a chance and take these little pieces of clay that can be shaped and molded and give them the same love and nurture and affection and support you give your children, and teach them that they are unique and that they're precious and there's only one person in the world like them and you will see this nation bloom. And we will have so many people who are qualified for the top job that it will be terrific and finally, if you can't pay the bill, you're dead in the water. And we have got to put our nation back to work. If you don't want to really do that, I'm not your man. I'd go crazy sitting up there slow-dancing that one; in other words unless we're going to do it, then pick somebody who likes to talk about it. Now just remember, when you think about me, I didn't create this mess, I've been paying taxes like you. And Lord knows, I've paid my share. Over a billion dollars in taxes. For a guy that started out with everything he owns in—

Q. I'm sorry.

PEROT. It's in your hands. I wish you well. I'll see you tomorrow night. On NBC 10:30, 11 Eastern.

Q. And finally, last but not least, Governor Clinton.

CLINTON. Thank you, Carole. Thank you ladies and gentlemen. Since I suggested this forum and I hope it's been good for all of you, I've really tried to be faithful to your request that we answer the questions specifically and pointedly. I thought I owed that to you and I respect you for being here and for the impact you've had on making this a more positive experience.

These problems are not easy and not going to be solved overnight. But I want you to think about just two or three things. First of all the people of my state have let me be the Governor for 12 years because I made commitments to two things. More jobs and better schools. Our schools are now better: our children get off to a better start from preschool programs and smaller classes in the early grades, and we have one of the most aggressive adult education programs in the country. We talked about that. This year my state ranks first in the country in job growth, fourth in manufacturing job growth, fourth in income growth, fourth in the decline of poverty. I'm proud of that. It happened because I could work with people, Republicans and Democrats. That's why we've had twenty-four retired generals and admirals, hundreds of business people, many of them Republican, support this campaign.

You have to decide whether you want to change or not. We do not need four more years of an economic theory that doesn't work. We've had twelve years of trickle-down economics. It's time to put the American people first, to invest and grow this economy. I'm the only person here who's ever balanced the government budget and I've presented twelve of them and cut spending repeatedly, but you cannot just get there by balancing the budget. We've got to grow the economy by putting people first. Real people like you. I've got into this race because I did not want my child to grow up to be part of the first generation of Americans to do worse than their parents. We're better than that. We can do better than that. I want to make America as great as it can be and I ask for your help in doing it. Thank you very much.

Bush begins by stroking his audience and attempting to stack the cards in his own favor. At the beginning of his statement, he sandwiches his strongest point—his foreign policy leadership—between the two “big issues” for which he has been criticized: the economy and the budget deficit. He then uses glittering generalities—as to the need to “strengthen the family” and the importance of “character,” “integrity,” and “maturity”—to cause his audience to associate his candidacy with positive emotions. Finally, Bush plays on his audience's fears when he asks the voters who their choice would be if in the next five minutes, the nation were faced with a major international threat.

Perot, as the underdog, strokes his audience much more directly. He underplays his own accomplishments and flatters his audience by repeatedly stating that the voters are important: “It's in your hands.” He uses plain-folks appeal by reminding his audience that he's just like them (and therefore not like the other two candidates). “I've been paying taxes,” Perot states, “like you,” and he has been using plain, folksy language—“If they just want to keep slow-dancing and talk about it, and not do it, I'm not your man.” Like Bush, Perot uses glittering generalities to associate his candidacy with what his audience holds dear: children and “the American dream.”

Clinton, like Bush, engages in some subtle cardstacking. Emphasizing the positive and ignoring the negative, he points to his record as governor of Arkansas, cites statistics to lend authenticity to these claims, and mentions the range of people who endorse him. At the same time, like Perot, he strokes his audience by promising to put “real people” like them first. And he plays on voters' guilt when he suggests that voting for Bush or Perot will be an act of selfishness that the voters' children will ultimately pay for.

Straightforward Purposes

When advertisers or propagandists try to manipulate our opinions and actions, we may become suspicious about the truthfulness of their statements. Fortunately, only a small fraction of writing is deliberately manipulative. More often a writer's purposes are honest, and the techniques writers use are not aimed at distorting readers' judgment. A novelist may wish to amuse us. A reporter may wish to inform us as objectively as possible. A political commentator may want us to think seriously about a matter of public concern. Still, we should know writers' purposes, not to guard ourselves—as we do against propaganda and misleading advertising—but to understand the legitimate uses we can make of writers' statements.

If you are not aware of the general theme of a book, you may be misled about its meaning. Perhaps when you stop by the local bookstore, you pick up a paperback and start reading in the middle:

Mario stood in the doorway, a strange light flashing from his eyes. His lips barely moved, “Carmen, I am here.”

“But Mario, I thought, . . .” her voice quivered.

“No. There was one thing I had to do first.” His deliberate steps matched the pounding of her heart. His eyes, flashing fire, fixed on her. He stopped in front of her, his lips slightly opened as if he had something to say, but couldn't say it. He reached for her.

True passion? You love romances and are about to buy it. But wait. You turn to the cover. *Compelled to Murder*. You do not enjoy thrillers so you replace it on the rack. The overall design of a piece of writing helps define the purpose and technique of each small part: the same words that bring expectation and a melting heart in a romantic fantasy bring fear and dread in a murder mystery.

The message that words convey depends on the purpose of the words within the context of a larger communication. For example, when the following words appear in a dictionary, they simply provide a definition, one piece of information among many other similar pieces of information.

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The dictionary tells you that *affective* is one word in the English language with a specific spelling and meaning, used particularly in the field of psychology. If, however, that same definition appears with a dozen other terms on a ditto sheet handed out by your psychology professor on the first day of class, the message is that you had better learn that word, for it is part of the basic vocabulary for the course. If your English professor writes the definition in the margin of your paper—after circling the word you wrote and changing your *a* to an *e*—the message is that you confused *affective* with the more common word *effective*. In each of these instances, your knowledge of the larger context helps you see the purpose of the text and receive the message its writer intended.

A Catalogue of the Purposes of Writing

The list of some of the more common purposes of writing that follows may help you identify the purposes of pieces of writing you read. Whenever you read a piece of writing, ask yourself what its purpose is and whether it fits in any of these categories. For example, the list of stock market prices in this morning's newspaper clearly belongs in the category "the conduct of business" and in the subcategory "to report information needed for making new decisions." An editorial in the same paper might be considered "instigation of public thought and action," specifically "to criticize the actions" of a particular public official. The comic strips would be "entertainment," perhaps in any of the three subcategories. Textbooks, including this one, are for the "transmission of knowledge to a wider audience" either "to provide an introduction to an area of knowledge" or "to instruct rigorously."

As you try to categorize actual pieces of writing that you have read, you may find that one piece of writing may serve several purposes; an amusing parody of a political candidate aims to influence your vote even as it entertains you. You may also find that you need to add categories or subcategories to fit the special text you are examining.

Entertainment

- To amuse and to delight
- To arouse emotions and sympathies
- To appeal to fantasy and imagination

Instigation of Public Thought and Action

- To raise questions
- To criticize the actions of others; to reprimand
- To weaken the support of opponents
- To persuade to act, vote, donate, etc.
- To inform of issues of concern

The Support of a Community of Common Beliefs

- To state one's beliefs; to take a stand
- To repeat the accepted beliefs of a group; to encourage and reinforce these beliefs
- o share recent developments and events that are of mutual concern
- To gain tolerance for one's beliefs in the wider community
- To persuade others of the correctness of certain views; to gain approval
- To recruit active support; to proselytize

The Conduct of Business and Government

- To promulgate laws, regulations, guidelines
- To report information needed for making new decisions, laws, policies
- To argue for certain lines of action
- To request funds or propose an activity to be funded
- To keep track of funds, projects, activities; to report on accomplishments and failures; to evaluate activities
- To sell, advertise

Transmission of Knowledge to a Wider Audience

- To satisfy curiosity
- To provide practical information for everyday use
- To provide an introduction to an area of knowledge
- To instruct rigorously, passing on the most recent knowledge, skill, or technique

Scholarly Inquiry

- To present new findings, recent information, the results of experiments
- To present new interpretations, speculations, thoughts
- To gather together all that is currently known on a subject to see how it fits together and to reach some conclusions
- To show the relationship of two areas of study and to show the light one sheds on the other
- To determine the truth of a matter and to prove that truth to other researchers

Clues to the Author's Purpose

We cannot read the minds of authors to find out what their true purposes are, but externally available clues reveal much about their purposes.

Overt Statements Pieces of writing that begin or end with commands like “vote for Paulsen” or “donate to this worthy cause today” make no secret of the writer's intentions. Titles can clearly indicate purpose, such as *How to Be a Big Winner on the Stock Market*, *The Encyclopedia of Sports*, *A Report on the Status of Mine Inspection Procedures*, *The Case for National Health Insurance*, and *Spanish Self-Taught*. Often in scholarly or professional books, and sometimes in more popular works, the introduction or preface specifically states the author's purpose and outlines the issues that gave rise to the book.

Knowledge About Publication Even if the author does not state the purpose of a piece of writing directly, where an article is published reveals much. An article appearing in a professional journal like *Journal of the History of Ideas*, *Harvard Theological Review*, or *Journal of Geology* is most likely to present new information or research and to evaluate current knowledge with a scholarly intent. An article in a general-circulation magazine devoted to one field, like *Scientific American*, *Psychology Today*, or *High Fidelity*, is more likely to present existing knowledge in a way understandable and useful to the nonspecialist, rather than presenting scholarly research. An article in a magazine issued by a corporation or other special-interest group, such as *Ford World*, *Teamster International*, or *Gun and Rifle*, would tend to convey a favorable impression of the organization's interests. Thus the stated and unstated editorial policy of the publication helps define the purposes of all articles that appear in it.

With books, attention to the publisher, the place of publication, and the date will give early approximations of an author's purpose. A book from an academic press, such as University of Pennsylvania Press or Stanford University Press, will usually have a scholarly purpose aimed at the advancement of knowledge. Commercial publishers range from well-established houses—such as Houghton Mifflin, W. W. Norton, and Random House, which publish nonfiction books of some seriousness of purpose for a general market, as well as other material—to sensationalist houses more concerned with playing on readers' prejudices or exploiting current popular topics than with providing substantive knowledge. In addition, special-interest publishers press the causes or beliefs of specific groups: many religious publishing houses, for example, are currently thriving. The more you know about the publisher, the more you will know about the purposes of the books it publishes.

The date and place of publication also may be a clue to understanding the purposes of the book. A book about Vietnam published in the United States in 1967 will probably be either highly critical or strongly supportive of American participation in the Vietnam War, and a reader would be wise to look out for author partisanship. A book published twenty years later by the same publisher on the same topic may be inquiring into what happened or how Americans now view the morality of that war. Books on the same topics published both in 1967 and 1987 by the Foreign Languages Press in Beijing, China, will have different purposes defined by their historical periods of publication. Everything you know about the history of the subject of a book will help you place the purpose of the work in proper perspective. If you become engaged in research touching on a controversy, you will become especially aware of such factors.

Knowledge About the Author In much the same way, knowledge of a particular author will give you some sense of the purposes of a book. But beware of oversimplification: one person may write different types of books. Nevertheless, if an author is known primarily as an advocate of a cause, a book by that person is likely to support that cause. Although often the work of ghost writers, autobiographical books by entertainment and sports celebrities frequently will play on popular notions about the celebrity's life, either by glorification or by expose of scandalous behavior. In this type of autobiography, even the “just plain folks” style currently in vogue is designed for image building. You may assume, however, that the works of reputed scholars writing in their fields of expertise are serious attempts to get at the truth of a matter—just as you may assume that the next book by an evangelical preacher known for spiritually uplifting works will be written to inspire faith.

Analysis of the Text The most substantial way of determining purpose—and the way against which all these other methods must be checked—is by close reading and analysis of what

actually is written in the book or article. The remainder of this chapter is devoted to this type of analysis. *What the writer includes is the best guide to what that writer is trying to do.* The use of many personal anecdotes might suggest that the writer is seeking your emotional response or sympathetic involvement in the material, just as the heavy use of statistics suggests that the writer's major interest is in providing documentation and proof of a thesis.

Investigation of Apparent Cross-purposes In any book, a discrepancy between the purposes suggested by any of the foregoing clues and what a writer actually accomplishes should make readers wonder. The discrepancy may be favorably explained, as in the autobiography of a political figure who rises above personal conflicts and political ambition to provide a dispassionate analysis of a controversial career. Marketing strategy or political pressure may cause a book to be given a misleading title or introduction that is not at all indicative of its actual contents. A serious sociological study of close relationships among adolescents would have a misleading title if it were called *Sex and the New Teenagers*. Sometimes, however, the discrepancy can be a serious weakness, particularly if an author does not achieve what he or she sets out to do. The author of an *Easy Guide to Preventive Medicine* may use language only an expert would understand. Most of all, a discrepancy may signal a desire to mislead: an interest group may attempt to lend credibility to its case by surrounding it with the trappings—but not the substance—of scholarship. The possibility of cross-purposes should make us wary as readers, but the mere possibility does not warrant drawing premature conclusions. If a conservationist with a well-known interest in the preservation of natural woodlands were to write a history of the lumber industry, as readers we should be most careful in evaluating the author's evidence. Even if the book contained much scholarly apparatus—with substantiated detail, statistics, footnotes, and other documentation—we still might want to check the facts it cites against other sources and consider whether all the writer's contentions were supported elsewhere. The writer-conservationist's interest in condemning the lumber industry might be stronger than an interest in the truth. Yet we should not reject the book out of hand. The author may have produced an accurate, scholarly work that correctly describes the lumber industry. If the facts are on the conservationist's side, the author's best strategy is indeed to present all the evidence as objectively as possible.

AN EXAMPLE OF DETERMINING PURPOSES

The following article from *The Conservationist*, “Retreads on an Old Problem” by John L. Turner, presents interesting problems in determining a writer's purpose. The article begins with an amusing picture and then seems to become an informative piece about an environmental problem. But on deeper inspection it shows evidence of many complex and related purposes. As you read this article the first time, look for clues to these other purposes.

Retreads on an Old Problem

Certainly you remember the classic, three-frame cartoon about the hapless fisherman who, after an excited and prolonged (but mostly self-imagined) struggle, has his catch break the pond's surface only to learn he has hooked an algae covered tire that had been resting peacefully on the pond bottom. That Cartoon is particularly apropos today in illustrating one of the more difficult but lesser known problems facing solid waste experts—what to do with the one percent of the waste stream composed of used automotive tires.

If measured strictly by numbers, the problem seems staggering. About 12 million tires are thrown away each year in New York State—enough, if laid flat, tread to tread, to stretch the

entire length of the New York State Thruway 12 times. Nationwide, approximately 260 million tires are disposed of yearly, an amount sufficient to circle the earth nearly four times. As fewer tires are used again through retreading, these yearly totals have been growing steadily and are being added to a national stockpile, scattered along roads, in dumps and hillsides, which contains over two billion tires.

While discarded tires are mostly inert, their presence in the environment is hardly benign. Tires are known for their nettlesome habit of rising to the top of landfills, puncturing liners, thereby thwarting the best made plans of reclamation experts. Each year, in New York, they take up an estimated one-half million cubic yards of valuable landfill space at a time when such space is shrinking rapidly. Tires also get caught in the wheels of landfill vehicles. Because of these problems, fewer and fewer landfills are accepting tires which, in turn, has encouraged illegal dumping. If not shredded or stacked properly, tires can collect water providing ideal mosquito breeding habitat; a State Health Department survey has identified eight mosquito species currently breeding in New York State tire dumps. Waste tires also often catch on fire, giving off billows of acrid, black smoke and generating contaminants which can pose a threat to ground and surface water quality. And regardless of these other problems, a heap of tires next to your favorite fishing or hiking spot is not a pretty sight.

Tires are receiving an increasing amount of attention by local and state governments and private industry. A two-day conference on the topic, entitled "Waste Tires in New York State: Alternatives to Disposal," was held in Albany in late 1987. Sponsored by DEC, the Department of Transportation and the Rockefeller Institute of Government, the conference focused on the nature and magnitude of the waste tire problem and presented a series of workshops detailing possible alternatives to disposal such as re-use.

The conference pointed out the need for additional regulations governing the operation and maintenance of existing tire dumps such as the infamous tire pile in Chautauqua County which held, as of 1987, between five and eight million tires. Highlighted in DEC's statewide solid waste management plan is a bill, first introduced in the 1987 legislative session by Assembly member Maurice Hinchey at the request of the attorney general, which establishes regulations banning the disposal of tires except at licensed facilities and requires that tires at such facilities be stored to minimize the possibility of fire and mosquito breeding. The bill would also create a state fund, financed through a 50 cent assessment on each tire sold in New York, to provide loans and grants to local municipalities, tire dump operators and recyclers. This bill is likely to receive a great deal of attention during the 1988 state legislative session. Independent of this legislative proposal, DEC is currently revising the state's solid waste regulations to include the transport, storage and disposal of tires. Legislation has also been introduced in Suffolk County which would create a commission to look into the waste tire issue.

A tried and true method of reducing the number of discarded tires is through retreading-gluing a new tread onto a used tire. Unfortunately, the trend in automotive retreads is downward due to a drop in the price of virgin rubber; the public is unwilling to buy a retreaded tire when for as little as a dollar or two more they can purchase a brand new one. The number of retreaded truck tires has remained steady, however.

Less a tire disposal method than a technique for enhancing fishing opportunities, tires have been used in constructing artificial underwater reefs. If properly sited, tire reefs quickly attract bottom-dwelling, colonizing organisms. These animals attract fish which, in turn, attract anglers. One reef containing over 22,000 tires has been built a mile off the Smithtown, Long Island shoreline. "Tires are ideal in making reefs," notes Steve Resler, a former Smithtown Bay constable who oversaw the reef construction. "You can stack them in different configurations or various ways depending on the situation," he says, adding, "blackfish have really taken to the reef." One major tire manufacturer has used tens of millions of tires in building several thousand reefs around the world.

A small number of tires are used in making playground equipment, planters, highway crash barriers and erosion control projects. These uses, and for that matter tire reefs, have limited potential, however, and will likely never make more than a minor contribution in easing the waste tire problem.

Using shredded rubber from discarded tires and blending it in road paving materials is an application that has potential for utilizing large amounts of discarded tires. In some applications the tires are shredded into pellet-sized particles called crumb rubber,

pre-heated and mixed into asphalt creating an asphalt rubber mixture; in other situations the rubber is added to concrete or asphalt concrete. In a 1985 report entitled "Use of Scrap Automobile Tire Rubber in Highway Construction," New York State's Department of Transportation estimated that, based on the quantity of paving materials it uses annually in road construction, over nine million tires would be consumed in making an asphalt concrete product which contains two percent rubber. More than four and one half million tires would be consumed for a one percent mixture.

The City of Phoenix has applied asphalt rubber compounds in road paving and repair projects for two decades with encouraging results. The addition of the rubber enables the asphalt to better withstand the stresses of vehicular traffic and weather. Test results in Phoenix have found that it lasts up to three times as long as regular asphalt, so while asphalt rubber costs about twice as much as regular asphalt the city has saved money over the long run. Although two studies undertaken by the Connecticut Department of Transportation have reported results generally favorable regarding asphalt rubber, its ability to withstand the rigor of colder climates remains unclear.

Recognizing this large but uncertain potential, Governor Mario Cuomo signed a bill in 1987 which directs DOT to initiate a pilot project using asphalt rubber. The agency is to report back to the State Legislature by April 1, 1989 with the results of this pilot project as well as a study comparing asphalt rubber with regular asphalt in terms of cost, maintenance requirements, skid resistance and other characteristics. Furthermore, the bill enables the commissioner to require, after May 1, 1989, the addition of scrap rubber in paving materials used by construction companies that receive contract work from DOT.

Several companies are interested in the energy potential of scrap tires. Made from petroleum, tires have a high energy value. It is estimated, for example, that the energy value in the number of tires disposed of annually in New York is equivalent to 700,000 barrels of oil. Furthermore, if all the tires generated yearly nationwide were burned, they would provide enough energy to keep the country running for one and a half days. Ironically, their potential as a fuel source is one of the reasons why many tire dumps exist as entrepreneurs have collected tires hoping to one day exploit their fuel value.

Some communities are investing in tire shredders so that they may more effectively store tires at landfill sites in the hope of eventually mining the tire "chips" as a fuel source.

A few incinerating plants are in operation. The first, located in Modesto, California, was built next to the world's largest tire heap containing between 35 to 40 million tires. It burns about 800 tires an hour generating 14 megawatts of electricity in the process. Another tire burning plant is currently planned in Connecticut.

Some companies are shredding tires and using the rubber to make new products. One plant, opening in Minnesota in 1987, manufactures car, walkway and wrestling mats and carpet underlayments from used tires. A polymer is injected into the old rubber "livening" it, providing properties very similar to virgin rubber. Before the advent of this new process, only a small amount (five to 10 percent) of used rubber could be blended into new rubber products before its quality would be compromised; rubber experts now believe that because of the polymerization technique much higher percentages of used rubber can be incorporated in new rubber products. The plant has the capacity to recycle three million tires a year, nearly all the tires annually discarded in Minnesota.

The crucial first step has been taken with regard to waste tires-realizing it as a growing problem for which solutions must be developed. Various initiatives proposed or in place in other states hold promise that environmentally sound and economically based programs can be effectively implemented. The extent of this progress, in the future, will determine whether our fictional angler friend hooks more fish than tires.

John L. Turner is a writer and naturalist who serves on the board of the Environmental Planning Lobby.

The illustrations of old tires and the opening reference to cartoons are clearly aimed at capturing readers' attention through amusement. Then the many facts about the tire-dumping problem suggest that the article has been written to inform you about a problem, that its main

purpose is to convey information. However, other clues point to a deeper understanding of what the article is doing.

This article has no overt statement of purpose, so we must by-pass this first kind of clue. But we can learn much from the publication in which the article appears. The masthead on the table of contents page announces that "*The Conservationist* is an official publication of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation." So the magazine and the article must in some way be advancing the work or interests of that state agency, as well as reflecting official state policy. When we go back to the article with this information, we immediately notice how often it mentions state agencies at work identifying hazards and helping protect the environment. Documents, conferences, and legislation related to the Department of Environmental Conservation are repeatedly mentioned as sources of information and indications of what is being done. Thus an awareness of the publication's sponsor combines with a quick analysis of the text to suggest that one further purpose is to let the readers know that the state and its departments have been doing their job. In a sense the article itself is part of the state doing its job to identify problems and to enlist public support for solutions.

However, if we look at the surrounding articles in the magazine, we notice that there must be something else going on. Most of the magazine is not devoted directly to environmental problems but rather to attractive descriptions of the parks, the wildlife, and the natural beauty of New York State. Much of the magazine seems to try to induce people to enjoy the state's nature preserves and to have good feelings about the state's facilities. In such a context, a story about a pollution problem that is being worked on shows how the state's parklands are being watched over and improved by alert state agencies. So even if your last trip to nature was spoiled by some tire pollution, your next trip won't be because the state is at work to help you have a better experience in a cleaner natural environment: it is using the tires to improve fishing, build playgrounds, and pave roads.

One final clue, information about the author, suggests one more level to the article's purposes, especially when combined with a bit more analysis of the text. At the end of the article appears a single sentence about the author: "John L. Turner is a writer and naturalist who serves on the board of the Environmental Planning Lobby." A lobby wants to influence legislation and government programs; in part this is accomplished by gathering public support for legislation on the lobby's issue and then giving public credit and political support to those governmental officials who have supported the lobby's cause. When we go back to the article, we now notice the many mentions of legislation and policies already in effect and the closing comments about proposed initiatives. Many agencies and officials, including Governor Cuomo, are described positively as working hard to solve the problem. The article also puts the readers in a mood to support future efforts. Thus here a state agency, through its publication, is working hand in hand with a lobbyist by publishing the lobbyist's article. The lobbyist in turn supports the work of the state agency by praising the agency and drumming up support for its projects.

Thus this article has many purposes, but these purposes do not contradict each other. Rather they fit together to help protect an environment that will be of pleasurable use for all of us. But cleaning up the environment involves politics, legislation, state agencies, informed citizens, and creative advocates. Within that more fundamental purpose, all the other purposes take their part.

EXERCISES

1. Referring to the catalogue of purposes on pages 110-111, categorize and discuss the purposes of each of the selections printed earlier and cited below.
 - a. Andrew Marvell's poem, "To His Coy Mistress," on pages 47-48.
 - b. Katherine Corcoran's essay, "Pilloried Clinton," on page 54.
 - c. Robert Keyes's discussion, "The Future of the Transistor," on page 65.
 - d. The Declaration of Independence, on page 46.
2. Find examples of published pieces of writing, including books, magazine articles, newspaper articles, and college bulletins or handbooks. Categorize and discuss the purposes of each.
3. Find examples of unpublished writing, such as business letters, memos, college papers, and personal writing. Categorize and discuss the purposes of each.
4. Choose a book from your major field or any other field of particular interest to you. List everything you can determine about the book's purpose from its preface, the facts and context of the book's publication, the author's life and interests, and a quick examination of the book itself.

The Writer's Technique

Because the writer's purpose is realized through the specifics of words in combination, the writer's technique is present in every sentence and in every word—as well as in the larger groupings of paragraphs. Technique is present in every choice made by the writer at every stage of creation. Thus, to observe the technique of any writer, you must use everything you know about reading and writing, about how people present themselves through words, and about how thoughts are shaped by the form in which they are put. Much in this book should help you directly and indirectly in the task of observing technique, but you must also call on everything you have learned before about your own writing and about the interpretation of other writers' works. The only way to understand technique is to analyze how each writer addresses each writing situation. However, the following check list covers some of the points you might look for and some of the more obvious questions to ask yourself. It will provide a starting place from which to begin your observation and evaluation of writers' technique. In time, the individual character of a piece of writing should suggest to you appropriate questions for your analysis, because each piece of writing operates in its own way.

Check List of Techniques

Relationship Between the Writer and the Reader

Does the writer ask or expect the reader to do anything?

Does the writer address the reader as an expert speaking to other experts, or as an expert speaking to the general reader?

Does the writer make sure that the reader follows the discussion?

Does the writer engage the reader through humor, drama, or unusual examples?

Is the writer hesitant or assertive?

How much knowledge does the writer assume the reader has?

Overall Structure

What holds the writing together as a whole?

How does one paragraph, one chapter, or one part lead to the next?

Does the text progress by chronological narration? by grouping related topics? through the steps of a logical argument? by comparison? association? repetition? by accumulation of detail? by analysis? by the breaking down of the subject into parts?

Content Choices

What parts of the subject are discussed by the author in great detail? What parts are summarized?

What statements does the writer assume as given (and therefore does not back up with extensive support)?

What relevant topics are ignored?

What topics could have been discussed but were not?

Expansion of Topics

In what ways are individual topics developed? Are arguments given? Are anecdotes told?

Is the reader asked to believe certain ideas or to take certain actions? Is the reader asked to imagine consequences?

Does the expansion of statements prove the statements? help the reader understand? keep the reader interested or amused? obscure the issues? develop implications?

Choice of Evidence

What types of information are used to support main statements: statistics, anecdotes, quotations, original observations, scientific theories, legal or philosophical principles, definitions, appeals to emotion, appeals to the imagination, appeals to common sense?

Uses of Reference

How extensively does the writer rely on other sources? (Are there frequent mentions of other books or articles?) Do you notice any indirect reference to the work of others?

What methods are used to refer to other works: reference by title only, paraphrase, summary, or direct quotation?

How complete is the documentation? the bibliography?

What kinds of material does the writer cite: contemporary newspaper accounts, private diaries, government documents, specialized scholarly studies, theoretical works, best-selling nonfiction books, statistical reports, literary works?

What purpose does the reference serve in the writing: does the reference provide specific evidence? quote directly a person being discussed? provide an assertion by an authority? present an example for analysis? explain a point? supply the background of a new idea? distinguish between conflicting ideas? place current work in the context of previous work? present an idea to be argued against?

Level of Precision

Is the subject simplified or presented in all its complexity?

Are all important distinctions brought out?

Are many supporting details given or are only broad principles stated?

Are potential difficulties in the argument discussed?

Sentence Structure

Are the sentences short or long? simple or complex?

Are the sentences declarative statements? Do they set up a complex condition (*if . . . then . . .*)?

Do the sentences have qualifiers (*even though . . .*)?

Do the sentences describe actions (*Sandra runs*; or *Gear c transmits the power to drive wheel d.*)? Do they describe physical qualities (*Sandra has a pulse at rest of 63*; or *Gear b and gear c are in a reduction ratio of 12:1*)? Do they relate actual events to abstract ideas (*The disagreement of the leaders over the terms of the treaty marked the beginning of new tensions between the two countries.*)? Do they discuss only abstractions (*International organizations are formed in part to resolve disputes between countries without resorting to war.*)?

Word Choice

Are the words short or long? common or unusual? general or technical? emotionally charged or scientifically objective?

Evaluating the Effectiveness of Technique

Having observed a writer's technique, you will be able to determine whether that technique is appropriate for the writer's purpose, whether stated or implied. You will begin to notice how the successfully comic writer makes you laugh by piling up absurd details. You will notice how carefully the scholarly historian has gathered together evidence, has weighed alternatives, and has progressed to a well-argued conclusion. You will notice how the thought-provoking philosopher uses a precise vocabulary in an attempt to minimize confusion about abstract meaning.

In certain instances you may notice a discrepancy between the stated purpose of a book or article and what is actually achieved in print. A book that claims to present new findings may, on closer inspection, rely heavily on previously discovered evidence put together in a familiar pattern. The comic writer may not pace jokes correctly or may be too predictable. A detective story may unfold so tediously that no one would want to spend leisure hours reading it. An author's evidence might prove only part of the thesis. Writers may fail in their purposes in an infinity of ways, and even the best of books have weaknesses. However, weakness is relative: a book that does not live up to a grand purpose might tell you more than one that fully achieves an extremely small goal. Misjudgment, lack of skill, or an attempt to do too much may explain these unintentional differences between a writer's intended purpose and actual accomplishment.

Other times an author *sets out* to mislead us, and we must understand the deception to understand the true design. Beneath a pile of evidence may lie a prejudiced assumption: when a reporter advises against building a community college in a poor neighborhood because that community has not previously produced many college graduates, the writer's prejudices may have translated the local lack of opportunity into an assumption that the residents of that

community are not college material. Thus the reporter's recommendation to deny opportunity may be made to sound respectable and evenhanded to nonresident readers while still delivering its unjust message.

The outright lie, the partial lie, and the partial truth will continue to appear in print. Deception can be achieved in many ways, and it helps readers to be aware not just of the deception itself but also of the motive behind the author's deception.

AN EXAMPLE OF LOOKING AT TECHNIQUE

The article "Retreads on an Old Problem" (see page 207) pursues its goal of enlisting support for solutions to an environmental problem by using many different techniques. We have already noticed how the author tries to interest readers in the problem by starting with an amusing title, a light-hearted opening, and unusual photographs, and also how the author tries to build alliances by praising supportive government officials and agencies. But the article works in many more ways at every level to help the reader become involved in the issue and supportive of certain programs.

First, by adopting an easy tone, the author, John C. Turner, helps engage the recreation-minded reader in a serious problem without turning the reader off with too somber a tone or too weighty a presentation. Of course, given the amount of detailed information to be conveyed and the kind of trust in the author's expertise the article needs to evoke, the author must come across as a knowledgeable authority. But at the same time he is careful to adopt a friendly, easygoing style, referring to everyone's common memory of cartoons. He is also careful to select easy-to-grasp but striking ways of conveying information, as with the visions of used tires encircling the earth. Sentences tend to be reasonably short and use familiar vocabulary, as in "Some companies are shredding tires and using the rubber to make new products." Concepts are also explained simply and directly, as in "Made from petroleum, tires have a high energy value." A number of simple and direct stories are told about what different cities and states are doing.

The entire article is structured around the idea of a problem to be solved. Even the title uses the word *problem*. The opening cartoon reference identifies the problem, then statistics are used to show the size of the problem, and finally the bad effects of the problem are discussed. Once the problem is thus fully established, we are told how governments have been at work on the problem and what alternative methods have been and are being tried. The reader is first made to be concerned about something that was previously just a joke, but this concern is relieved by programs that could solve the problem. Thus the reader will naturally wish to support those programs, agencies, and politicians that are taking the necessary steps to allow the angler to hook fish rather than tires. In fact, the last paragraph is a direct appeal to support efforts toward solution.

The selection of material is directly determined by the same problem-and-solution approach. After laying out information on the size and nature of the problem, the article concentrates on describing the various methods used to dispose of the problem. And, as noted earlier, because support of government action is being enlisted, many details are chosen to highlight the role of state agencies and officials in seeking solutions.

There does not appear to be any deception involved in this article, and there is no reason to disbelieve any of the information presented; moreover, the author carefully notes where he is unsure of the effectiveness of any proposed solution. Nonetheless, we still need to be aware that this article is urging us to a particular point of view through its selection, organization, and presentation of the material. Although this article argues its case so persuasively that it is hard to

imagine anyone who would be against getting rid of old tires from our lakes and streams, people not so interested in pushing government action in this area or with specific objections to certain of the proposed solutions would tell a different story.

EXERCISES

1. Using the Check List of Techniques on page 117-119, identify the techniques of each of the selections cited below.
 - a. Andrew Marvell's poem "To His Coy Mistress" (pages 47-48).
 - b. Katherine Corcoran's essay "Pilloried Clinton" (page 54).
 - c. Robert Keyes's discussion "The Future of the Transistor" (page 65).
 - d. The Declaration of Independence (page 46).
 - e. The anonymous essay "It's Over, Debbie" (page 74).
2. Bring writing examples from the following categories into class, and identify the techniques used in them (refer to Check List of Techniques).
 - Newspaper/headline stories
 - Newspaper editorials
 - Information pamphlets from a government agency
 - Political campaign brochures
 - Advertising brochures from banks, product manufacturers, service companies, or any other type of business
 - Junk mail Magazine articles
 - College textbooks
 - Religious inspirational articles

Writing an Essay Analyzing Purpose and Technique

Perhaps in literature classes you have already written a literary analysis discussing how certain aspects of a story, such as character development or the use of irony, contribute to the overall meaning of the story. The task of literary analysis is similar to an *analysis of purpose and technique*, except that your subject is a piece of nonfiction prose rather than a poem or short story. In this type of analysis, sometimes called *rhetorical analysis*, you show how the details of technique contribute to the larger purposes of the writer.

Journalists and other political commentators often analyze politicians' rhetoric, or purposeful use of words, to reveal exactly what the politicians are trying to do. Sometimes intellectual arguments, as well, depend on rhetorical analysis rather than on points of fact. Whenever you need to understand how other people's use of words pushes your thinking as a reader in certain directions, analyzing the writer's purpose and technique will give you the necessary perspective and understanding.

In most situations, the need to understand a text deeply suggests that you must analyze the text's rhetoric. When you are assigned an essay of analysis as part of your course work, however, your first task will be to select a suitable text to analyze. If you choose a selection in an area about which you have some knowledge, you will already have a sense of the typical purposes and techniques of writing in that area. If, for example, you have followed a presidential campaign closely and are familiar with its issues, you already have the background against which to consider any single campaign speech. If you pick a selection related to a larger project that you

are engaged in, such as a term paper, you may have additional motivation for doing the analysis. Finally, you should choose a short passage with striking features of purpose and technique so that you can focus your essay easily and can cover all the details in a relatively short paper. As you become more adept at this type of analysis, you may wish to tackle more subtle or more extensive texts. In the beginning, however, analyzing simple short passages will be difficult enough.

Your second task is a thorough reading and understanding of the selection. In order to analyze a text, you must know the text in detail, paying attention to every word.

Thirdly, once you understand both the complete meaning and the organizational structure of the text, you are able to focus on identifying the details of technique. Marginal annotation is especially useful here—to help you remember details you identify as you read. In the margin, you can number the steps of an argument and comment on the relationship of one point to the next. You can comment on the type of evidence, on the sentence structure, on unusual word choices—or on any hunches you have about the writer's purpose. These initial marginal reactions may lead you to further thoughts and observations. Particularly useful is questioning anything that seems unusual: “Doesn't this example contradict an earlier example?” or “Why does the author linger on this point?” Any clue may lead you to a recurrent element or a general pattern.

After noting the various techniques of the selection, as a fourth step you should sit back and think of what overall purpose the author may have had in writing—what purpose all the details serve. A journal may help you work out the connections among the separate elements you have noticed.

Begin to think about writing your essay only when you have a consistent idea about how the selection achieves its purpose. In the fifth step you must decide on a main *analytic statement—that* is, a central idea controlling the essay, much like a thesis statement. You must decide whether you will limit yourself to one element of the overall design or will consider all the related elements in one selection. Then you must select your supporting statements and major evidence. Again use journal entries and random jottings to sort out your thoughts.

Your sixth step will be to reread the selection again with the following tasks in mind before you begin actually writing the essay:

- Check to see if your analytic statement fits all the evidence of the selection or explains only a small part.
- Figure out how you will assemble your own ideas and evidence as an accurate representation of the original's design; let the design of your own paper crystallize by making a final survey of the selection to be analyzed.
- Fill in details of evidence that you missed in previous readings or that have become more important in light of your analytical statement.

Only with your thoughts beginning to take shape and your evidence assembled are you ready to write. If you skip over any of the six preparatory steps just described, you may run into problems. Selecting an inappropriate text to analyze may create an impossible task for you. Without accurate understanding of the text, your analysis will be misguided. Without calling attention to specific details of technique, your discussion will slide into summary or generalizations. Without careful thought about the order in which the parts of your analysis fit together, your essay will be a disorganized jumble. Without deciding on a main analytic statement, you risk losing control of the essay. Finally, without verifying your analysis against the original text, you may miss important evidence or may make misleading claims. Writing a

complex essay, such as an analysis of a writer's purpose, requires you as a writer to do many different kinds of preparatory tasks in order to develop your ideas fully. Only when you have completed all the preliminary tasks are you ready to communicate in writing your findings to your readers.

Guidelines for Preparing to Write an Analysis of Purpose and Technique

1. Select a suitable text to analyze.
2. Read the selection carefully, with attention to detail.
3. Focus on details of the writer's technique—use marginal annotations.
4. Reflect on the overall purpose the author may have had—a reading journal may help you there.
5. Decide on a main *analytical statement* and select supporting statements and evidence.
6. Before you begin writing the essay, reread the evidence.

The Structure of the Essay of Analysis

The main purpose of your essay is to present a major insight into the overall design of a selected passage of writing. That insight is the *analytic statement* of the essay, similar to a thesis statement or topic sentence. To flesh out the analytic statement, you must explain what you think the writer's purpose is and must give specific examples of writing techniques employed in the original text. In other words, your task is to show your readers the *pattern* of purpose and technique that you have discovered in a given selection.

Because this analytic task is such a specific one, you must take care that you do not gradually slide into a different task, such as a summary or argument. If your essay begins to sound like a paraphrased or summarized repetition of the original selection, you should stop and rethink what you are doing. In the course of your analysis, you may need to summarize or paraphrase a small part of the original as evidence for a claim you make, but such repetition of the original must be limited and have a clear purpose. Similarly, if you find yourself responding more to the content of the piece than to its design, you need to stop and think. Any personal reaction or response that you discuss should be directly related to the overall design. In this kind of essay, you do develop your own thoughts and opinions, but these thoughts and opinions must concern the purpose and technique of the selection's author.

Introduction The introduction of your analytic essay identifies the passage you are analyzing with the title of the book or article and the author. Include a copy if possible; otherwise cite exact page and line references. Next, your analytical statement should clearly state the major purpose and the major techniques of the original. This analytic statement will control all that follows in your essay.

Development: Two Approaches The body of the essay should elaborate the separate elements that make up the larger design. Here you enumerate all the techniques you have discovered and support them by specific examples, using quotation, paraphrase, summary, or description. You must relate each technique to the overall analytic statement so that the reader sees how each detail is tied in to the larger design. Transitional statements at the beginning of each paragraph

(such as “Once again the author misleads the reader when he implies ...” or “The emotional anecdote discussed at length prepares the reader for the direct appeal for sympathy in the last paragraph”) help tie parts of the essay together.

Also useful are extended discussions of the relationship of each technique to the overall purpose, as in the following example: “This particular use of statistics focuses the reader’s attention on the issue of economic growth, while it excludes consideration of the effect on individual lives, which the author earlier stated was not accurately measurable. By admitting only statistical evidence and limiting the way it may be interpreted, the author can offer clear-cut—but one-sided—evidence for continuation of the current policy.” The connections you make between the details of technique and the analytical statement are what will give your essay its direction and strength.

There are two main ways to proceed in the body of the paper: you can (1) describe the techniques used throughout the selection, discussing them one by one, or (2) describe all the techniques used in each small part of the selection, moving from the beginning to the end of the selection. In the first method your cumulative paragraphs establish all the relevant techniques one after the other. You should plan carefully the order in which you present the examples of techniques. In one analysis, for example, an early examination of a writer’s attempts to slander through word choice may establish the ideas necessary to expose the disguised strategies of organization. In another analysis, the smaller details of technique may fall in place only after the larger organization is examined.

The second method, covering all the techniques in each small section at one time, results in analyzing the original selection in chronological order. This method is particularly useful if the text goes through several distinct stages. The chronological method explores how the writer builds each point on the previous ones by adding new elements, by shifting gears, or by establishing emotional momentum.

The danger of the chronological method, however, is that you risk slipping into summary by just repeating the arguments in their original order. Beware of transitions like “the next point the author makes is ... backed by the next point that...” Such transitions indicate that you are forgetting your analysis and are reverting to repetition of the original argument. A way to avoid this problem is to show how the character of the writer’s argument shifts and develops by stages. Always keep your analyst’s eye on *purpose* and *technique*. Thus the weak transition cited above might be improved in the following way: “At this point the author initiates a new stage of her argument. Up to here she has been arguing smaller separate points, but now she brings them all together as part of a broader conclusion.” Make sure you are not carried away by your example. Tell only enough to support your statement; otherwise, the ever-present temptation to summarize may overcome you. If you find the temptation to slip into summary too strong, avoid chronology altogether and organize your essay around specific techniques. This safer method forces you to rearrange and rethink the material.

Conclusion In the conclusion of your analysis, do more than simply repeat your main points. Drive home your analytic statement in a striking way that grows out of all you have said previously. After having shown the reader all your ideas and specific evidence, you should be able to make a more penetrating observation than you could at the beginning—before you laid out the evidence. If you have additional moral, ethical, or intellectual reactions to the selection, the conclusion is the place to express such reactions. Since there is no single, all-purpose way of concluding, feel free to experiment. The only important point to remember is that the essay’s conclusion should grow out of and reinforce the analysis.

A STUDENT EXAMPLE FOR DISCUSSION

The article below from the “Personal Business” column of *Business Week* is immediately followed by an analysis by student writer Gary Niega. Try to analyze the purpose and technique of Baum's article before reading Gary's essay.

[COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL REMOVED]

Sample Analysis of Purpose and Technique

How to Offer Advice: An Analysis of “How to Be Smarter than the Boss and Keep Your Job,”
by Laurie Baum

Near the back of *Business Week* magazine every week there appears a “Personal Business” column providing practical information for readers on their investments and careers. Usually the information is about financial opportunities, tax laws, or new products: things the reader would benefit knowing about but which do not threaten the reader directly. The June 29, 1987, issue, however, presents a trickier kind of useful information: personal advice on how to act when feeling frustrated by a boss you feel is stupid. For the advice to be useful it must be accepted by the reader, yet nobody likes being told how to behave, especially in a frustrating situation. The short piece “How to Be Smarter than the Boss and Keep Your Job” uses many techniques to make the reader feel the advice might be personally useful.

From the beginning of the article, the author, Laurie Baum, empathizes with the reader's position. Two characters appear throughout the selection: you and your boss (or him). By speaking directly to you, the reader, about your problem with him (the obstacle to your success) the author takes your side in the struggle. The boss is portrayed as not understanding, not as smart, uninformed, having a special language, wanting to get credit for your idea. He is the bad guy and you are the good guy.

Laurie Baum also makes you feel she is on your side in more direct ways. She sympathizes with your emotions. She recognizes your feelings of frustration, tension, desire to do something, any ambition. She also flatters you by accepting your feeling that you are smarter than the boss from the very title on. The opening sentences put together all these elements in taking your point of view in the situation: You are brilliant; he does not understand; it (the situation) is frustrating. However, with the phrase “It's frustrating” Baum begins a gradual process of leading you to a less personal view of the situation. She does not say you are frustrated, but the Situation is frustrating. She then raises a series of reasons why the boss may be behaving as he does: he is politically wise; he is not as close to the facts of the case; he is thinking about other problems. None of these reasons directly challenge your view that you are smart, but they do raise possibilities of the boss being less stupid than you thought. Only at the very end does Baum raise the possibility that the boss had good reasons for looking “dimly on the idea” and that “it's not as brilliant as you think.” Only the idea is less than brilliant, but not you. By creating some objective distance between you and your ideas, Baum encourages you to let go of the idea, while still not challenging your intelligence.

Halfway through the piece, Baum also shifts from sympathetically describing a situation to telling you what you might do. She starts putting the burden of responsibility for the situation on you. You need to manage the tension; you need to communicate with the boss and sell your idea; you need to develop an end-run strategy; and finally, you need to judge whether your idea is really all that brilliant. This section is filled with do's and don't's phrased as imperative sentences: “Tell your boss ...”; “Make sure. “Don't play the martyr....” Seven out of the final fifteen sentences are commands, whereas only one of the first eleven sentences is.

To encourage you to be cautious, Baum repeatedly suggests the dangers of the situations throughout the piece, starting with the title's reminder that your goal is to keep

your job, not lose it. The second paragraph points out that you will not be rewarded for showing your intelligence, and that you would be better off to develop political wisdom. The third paragraph mentions the disruptive effect of your greater knowledge on the business hierarchy. And the final paragraph raises the threat of your seeming to be both stupid and disloyal if you go behind your boss's back with the wrong idea.

Baum offers the advice throughout in simple, direct language, sometimes even using very informal words, such as dimwit, smarts: stupid, and lingo, so that the advice will seem like ordinary good sense. She does, however, back it up with the quoted words of experts in business management to show that the ideas are more than just personal opinions. In fact, she gives over the larger part of three paragraphs to these expert quotations. Moreover, she very carefully sets out credentials for each of the experts, so we will be more likely to believe their wisdom; two are professors and the third is an author.

By flattering your intelligence and being sympathetic to your feelings, Laurie Baum gradually leads you to move beyond your own sense of superiority and frustration. She gradually helps you evaluate your boss's strengths, your responsibilities, the quality of your ideas, and your real goals. She helps you see that keeping your job and advancing your career are more important than proving you are smarter than your boss. Being cautiously aware of dangers, opportunities, and your options is truly being smart.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

- 1.** Analyze the purpose and technique of a short article you have read as part of your research for a major research project. The audience for your analysis will be someone who shares your research interest.
- 2.** In an essay of 500 words, analyze the purpose and technique of a chapter in an elementary textbook on a subject you know well. Consider how effectively the chapter introduces the subject to a beginning student. The reader of your analysis will be a teacher who must decide whether to use the textbook in a course next semester.
- 3.** In an essay of 500 words, analyze the purpose and technique of *one* of the following selections. The readers of your analysis will be your classmates. Later compare in discussion with your classmates the different designs of the three selections.
 - a. Yale Kamisar's argument against active euthanasia on page 74.
 - b. Cheryl Smith's argument for active euthanasia on page 74.
 - c. The anonymous essay "It's Over, Debbie" on page 74.
- 4.** As a college student majoring in political science, you have been invited back to your high school to discuss with a tenth-grade social studies class how politicians appeal to voters. Find in a newspaper a recent speech by a local or national political figure the students would recognize. Prepare a short talk for the class explaining what the politician is hoping to accomplish in the speech and the techniques the politician uses to achieve this effect.
- 5.** On an issue you feel strongly about, find two written statements in speeches, articles, pamphlets, or the like that forcefully present two opposite positions. One side you approve of and the other you oppose. In order to convince your classmates that yours is the more rational or otherwise preferred position, analyze both statements to show how the statement you oppose uses underhanded techniques to enlist reader support, whereas the statement you agree with gains reader support through honorable, reasonable, or otherwise better means.