What you will learn in this chapter:

2.1 To find issues to explore
2.2 To read sources rhetorically by analyzing a text’s genre, purpose, and degree of advocacy
2.3 To read to believe an argument’s claims
2.4 To read to doubt an argument’s claims
2.5 To delay closure by thinking dialectically

In the previous chapter we explained that argument focuses on both truth seeking and persuasion. In this chapter, we focus on inquiry (truth seeking) as the entry point into argumentative conversations. Unfortunately, in today’s wired environment these conversations often preclude truth seeking. They are carried on within isolated echo chambers of like-minded participants who believe they already possess the truth. We can observe these echo chambers on politically homogenous Web sites, on cable news channels, or on talk-show debates where participants shout at each other with no interest in listening to alternative views. This reductive trend has elicited the concern of cultural critics, journalists, rhetoricians, scholars, and citizens. Journalist Matt Miller recently posed the questions, “Is it possible in America today to convince anyone of anything he doesn’t already believe?… [A]re there enough places where this mingling of minds occurs to sustain a democracy?”

We believe this “mingling of minds” is essential if we are to understand argument as a search for the best solutions to problems. To do so means to position ourselves as inquirers as well as persuaders. In this chapter we approach argument as an exploratory process in which participants try to suspend judgment and delay closure by engaging thoughtfully with alternative points of view, truly listening to other perspectives, examining their own values and assumptions, and perhaps even changing their views. We value the insight of rhetorician Wayne Booth, who proposes that when we enter an

argumentative conversation, we should not ask first "How can I change your mind?" but rather "When should I change my mind?".

In this chapter, we present some practical strategies for reading and exploring arguments in an open-minded and intellectually responsible way. To illustrate argument as inquiry, we will show you how one student, Trudie Makens, explored the problem of whether fast-food workers and other low-wage laborers should be paid a "living wage" of $15 per hour.

**Finding Issues to Explore**

2.1 To find issues to explore

Your engagement with a controversial issue might be sparked by personal experience, by conversations with others, or by something you listen to, see, or read. Sometimes you will be confused about the issue, unable to take a stand. At other times, you will have a visceral gut reaction that causes you to take an immediate position, even though you haven't thought through the issue in depth. At the start of the arguing process, the confused or puzzlement is often the stronger one because it promotes inquiry as truth seeking. If you start with a firm stand, you might be less disposed to uncover your issue's complexity and let your position evolve. In this section we examine some strategies you can use to find issues worth exploring.

**Do Some Initial Brainstorming**

As a first step, make an inventory of issues that interest you. Many of the ideas you develop may become subject matter for arguments that you will write later in this course. The chart on page 19 will help you generate a productive list.

Once you've made a list, add to it as new ideas strike you and return to it each time you are given a new argumentative assignment.

**Be Open to the Issues All around You**

We are surrounded by argumentative issues. You'll start noticing them everywhere once you get attuned to them. You will be invited into argumentative conversations by posters, bumper stickers, blog sites, newspaper editorial pages, magazine articles, the sports section, movie reviews, song lyrics, and so forth. When you read or listen, watch for "hot spots"—passages or moments that evoke strong agreement, disagreement, or confusion. As an illustration of how arguments are all around us, try the following exercise on the issue of a living wage for low wage workers.

Explore Ideas by Freewriting

Freewriting is useful at any stage of the writing process. When you freewrite, you put fingers to keyboard (or pen to paper) and write rapidly nonstop, usually five to ten minutes at a stretch, without worrying about structure, grammar, or correctness. Your goal is to generate as many ideas as possible without stopping to edit your work. If you can't think of anything to say, write "relax" or "I'm stuck" over and over until new ideas emerge. Here is how Trudie Makens did a freewrite in response to the protest photo on page 1.

Trudie's Freewrite

Working in the food and service industry as a busser, I relate to the man in the picture holding the sign reading "Stand with Fast Food Workers." It's hard to live off of minimum wage, and if it weren't for my tips, I wouldn't be able to pay some of my bills. And that is with help from my parents since I am a college student. I can't imagine what it would be like for full-time workers in the fast-food industry where orders are taken via counter. I remember when I worked counter service jobs, as a barista and at a dumpling café, no one ever tipped. They didn't feel like they needed too since it was not formal wait service.
My work, and my coworkers’ work, was not valued. What some people don't realize is that whether you are working at McDonalds or in an upscale restaurant, you are still working hard to provide good service. If anything, it is harder to work jobs like McDonalds where customers are dismissive and don't value the service they are receiving. Think, relax. Why do people not value the work of fast-food and counter service workers? Because it is considered unskilled labor? A lot of the people I have worked with didn’t have the time or money to go to college because they were burdened with the financial strains of having children or caring for sick or elderly relatives. I remember my coworker Maria who was always stressed out because she couldn't pay her rent and had a child to support. A living wage would help people who haven't been lucky enough to inherit wealth to pull themselves out of poverty. And it wouldn't hurt corporations like McDonalds to live with a little less profit.

Explore Ideas by Idea Mapping

Another good technique for exploring ideas is idea mapping. When you make an idea map, draw a circle in the center of a page and write some trigger idea (a broad topic, a question, or working thesis statement) in the center of the circle. Then record your ideas on branches and subbranches extending from the center circle. As long as you pursue one train of thought, keep recording your ideas on that branch. But when that line of thinking gives out, start a new branch. Often your thoughts will jump back and forth between branches. That's a major advantage of “picturing” your thoughts; you can see them as part of an emerging design rather than as strings of unrelated ideas.

Idea maps usually generate more ideas, though less well-developed ones, than freewrites. Figure 2.4 shows an idea map that student Trudie Makens created on the issue of minimum wage after class discussion of the visual texts in Figures 2.1–2.3.

![Figure 2.4 Trudie's idea map](image-url)
Explore Ideas by Playing the Believing and Doubting Game

The believing and doubting game, a critical thinking strategy developed by rhetorician Peter Elbow that systematically stretches your thinking, is an excellent way to imagine views different from your own and to anticipate responses to those views.

- As a believer, your role is to be wholly sympathetic to an idea. You must listen carefully to the idea and suspend all disbelief. You must identify all the ways in which the idea may appeal to different audiences and all the reasons for believing the idea. The believing game can be difficult, even frightening, if you are asked to believe an idea that strikes you as false or threatening.

- As a doubter, your role is to be judgmental and critical, finding fault with an idea. The doubting game is the opposite of the believing game. You do your best to find counterexamples and inconsistencies that undermine the idea you are examining. Again, it can be threatening to doubt ideas that you instinctively want to believe.

When you play the believing and doubting game with an assertion, simply write two different chunks, one chunk arguing for the assertion (the believing game) and one chunk opposing it (the doubting game). Freewrite both chunks, letting your ideas flow without censoring. Or, alternatively, make an idea map with believing and doubting branches. Here is how student writer Trudie Makens played the believing and doubting game with the assertion "Fast-food workers should be paid $15 per hour."

Trudie's Believing and Doubting Game

Believing: I doubt anyone strives to become a full-time fast-food worker, but many people become stuck in those jobs and can't advance because they don't have a college education or because there are no better jobs available. Sometimes the workers are college students, so an increase in minimum pay would help them not accrue so much debt and perhaps have more time to study because they wouldn't have to work so many hours. But the real benefit would come to the uneducated, unskilled fast-food worker whose financial situation has led him or her to the fast-food job. The current minimum wage is barely livable. If the fast-food worker were to receive $15 per hour, there is far more of a chance for them to support themselves and their family comfortably without the stress of poverty. Even if the full-time fast-food worker does not go on to get more skills or go to college, it becomes more likely their children will be able to go to college if the fast-food worker is receiving a higher wage. Thus, the cycle of poverty as it is inherited generationally is, at least mildly, disrupted.

Doubting: If a $15 per hour minimum wage were to be implemented, the fast-food corporations would have to find ways to compensate for the profit loss. The most obvious way would be to raise food prices. If prices were to rise, fast food would no longer be affordable. This could have damaging and reversing effects on the working class who may rely on cheap fast food. Another problem is that the $15 per hour minimum wage may encourage workers to stay put in their jobs and not strive for a career. The student worker may no longer see the benefit of going into debt to get a degree and be satisfied with their current fast-food job. The effect of more desirable fast-food jobs may put pressure on other companies to raise the hourly wage of their entry-level positions. The rise in wage may, again, have the ripple effect of higher-priced products, thus reducing sales and forcing those companies to lay off some workers. No matter what scenario is dreamt up, it would seem
that raising the minimum wage to $15 per hour, even if just for fast-food workers, might have damaging effects on the economy that would diminish any benefits or advantages that theoretically come from receiving a higher wage.

Although Trudie sees the injustice of paying low wages to fast-food workers, she also sees that paying such workers $15 per hour might raise the cost of food, reduce the number of jobs available, or have other negative consequences. Playing the believing and doubting game has helped her articulate her dilemma and see the issue in more complex terms.

FOR WRITING AND DISCUSSION  Playing the Believing and Doubting Game

Individual task: Choose one or more of the following controversial claims and play the believing and doubting game with it, through either freewriting or idea mapping.

1. A student should report a fellow student who is cheating on an exam or plagiarizing an essay.
2. Federal law should forbid the purchase of assault weapons or high-capacity magazines.
3. Athletes should be allowed to take steroids and human growth hormone under a doctor's supervision.
4. Illegal immigrants already living in the United States should be granted amnesty and placed on a fast track to U.S. citizenship.

Group task: Working in pairs, in small groups, or as a whole class, share your results with classmates.

Reading Texts Rhetorically

2.2 To read sources rhetorically by analyzing a text's genre, purpose, and degree of advocacy

Once you become engaged with an issue, you will typically research it to understand the various voices in the conversation, the points of disagreement, the uses of evidence and counter-evidence, and the underlying assumptions and beliefs of different stakeholders. When you find these sources yourself, you will need the skills of library, database, and Web research taught in Part Five of this text. Often, however, the sources you read may be supplied for you in an anthology, textbook, course pack, or course Web site. In this section, we focus on the skills of reading sources rhetorically by analyzing their genre, their author's purpose and intended audience, and the text's degree of advocacy. In later chapters, we discuss rhetorical reading in more depth: Chapter 5 teaches the concept of "angle of vision" based on the way an argumentative text selects and frames evidence; Chapter 8 teaches you how to write a rhetorical analysis of a text; and finally Chapters 15–17 teach the skills of research writing from a rhetorical perspective.

Genres of Argument

To situate an argument rhetorically, you should know something about its genre. A genre is a recurring type or pattern of argument such as a letter to the editor, a political cartoon, or the home page of an advocacy Web site. Genres are
often categorized by recurring features, formats, and styles. The genre of any given argument helps determine its length, tone, sentence complexity, level of informality or formality, use of visuals, kinds of evidence, and the presence or absence of documentation.

When you read arguments reprinted in a textbook such as this one, you lose clues about the argument's original genre. (You should therefore note the information about genre provided in our introductions to readings.) Likewise, you can lose clues about genre when you download articles from the Internet or from licensed databases such as LexisNexis or ProQuest. (See Chapter 15 for explanations of these research tools.) When you do your own research, you therefore need to be aware of the original genre of the text you are reading—to know, for example, whether the piece was originally a newspaper editorial, a blog, a peer-reviewed scholarly article, or something else.

In the following chart we identify most of the genres of argument through which readers and writers carry on the conversations of a democracy.

### Genres of Argument

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Explanation and Examples</th>
<th>Stylistic Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal correspondence</td>
<td>▪ Letters or e-mail messages</td>
<td>▪ Style can range from a formal business letter to an informal note</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Often sent to specific decision makers (complaint letter, request for an action)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters to the editor</td>
<td>▪ Published in newspapers and some magazines</td>
<td>▪ Very short (fewer than three hundred words) and time sensitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Provide a forum for citizens to voice views on public issues</td>
<td>▪ Can be summaries of longer arguments, but often focus in “sound bite” style on one point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper editorials and op-ed pieces</td>
<td>▪ Published on the editorial or op-ed (“opposite-editorial”) pages</td>
<td>▪ Usually short (500–1,000 words)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Editorials promote views of the newspaper owners/editors</td>
<td>▪ Vary from explicit thesis-driven arguments to implicit arguments with stylistic flair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Op-ed pieces, usually written by professional columnists or guest writers, range in bias from ultraconservative to socialist (see pages 343–345 in Chapter 15)</td>
<td>▪ Have a journalistic style (short paragraphs) without detailed evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Often written in response to political events or social problems in the news</td>
<td>▪ Sources usually not documented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genre</td>
<td>Explanation and Examples</td>
<td>Stylistic Features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Blogs and postings to chat rooms and electronic bulletin boards | ■ Web-published commentaries, usually on specific topics and often intended to influence public opinion  
■ Blogs (Web logs) are gaining influence as alternative commentaries to the established media | ■ Often blend styles of journalism, personal narrative, and formal argument  
■ Often difficult to determine identity and credentials of blogger |
| Articles in public affairs or niche magazines | ■ Reflect a wide range of perspectives  
■ Usually written by staff writers or freelancers  
■ Appear in public affairs magazines such as *National Review* or *The Progressive* or in niche magazines for special-interest groups such as *Rolling Stone* (popular culture), *Minority Business Entrepreneur* (business), or *The Advocate* (gay and lesbian issues)  
■ Often reflect the political point of view of the magazine | ■ Often provide hyperlinks to related sites on the Web  
■ Frequently include narrative elements rather than explicit thesis-and-reasons organization  
■ Often provide well-researched coverage of various perspectives on a public issue |
| Articles in scholarly journals             | ■ Peer-reviewed articles published by nonprofit academic journals subsidized by universities or scholarly societies  
■ Characterized by scrupulous attention to completeness and accuracy in treatment of data | ■ Usually employ a formal academic style  
■ Include academic documentation and bibliographies  
■ May reflect the biases, methods, and strategies associated with a specific school of thought or theory within a discipline |
| Legal briefs and court decisions           | ■ Written by attorneys or judges  
■ "Friend-of-the-court" briefs are often published by stakeholders to influence appeals courts  
■ Court decisions explain the reasoning of justices on civic cases (and often include minority opinions) | ■ Usually written in legalese, but use a logical reasons-and-evidence structure  
■ Friend-of-the-court briefs are sometimes aimed at popular audiences |

(Continued)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Explanation and Examples</th>
<th>Stylistic Features</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Organizational white papers  | - In-house documents or PowerPoint presentations aimed at influencing organizational policy or decisions or giving informed advice to clients  
- Sometimes written for external audiences to influence public opinion favorable to the organization  
- External white papers are often posted on Web sites or sent to legislators | - Usually desktop or Web published  
- Often include graphics and other visuals  
- Vary in style from the dully bureaucratic (satirized in *Dilbert* cartoons) to the cog and persuasive |
| Public affairs advocacy advertisements | - Published as posters, fliers, Web pages, or paid advertisements  
- Condensed verbal/visual arguments aimed at influencing public opinion  
- Often have explicit bias and ignore alternative views | - Use succinct “sound bite” s  
- Employ document design, listed lists, and visual elements (graphics, photographs, or drawings) for rhetorical effects |
| Advocacy Web sites            | - Usually identified by the extension “.org” in the Web site address  
- Often created by well-financed advocacy groups such as the NRA (National Rifle Association) or PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals)  
- Reflect the bias of the site owner  
- For further discussion of reading and evaluating Web sites, see Chapter 15, page 355 | - Often contain many layers of hyperlinks to other sites  
- Use visuals and verbal text to create an immediate visceral response favorable to the owner’s views  
- Ethically responsible sites disclose their bias and put in an “About Us” or “Miss Statement” link on the home page |
| Visual arguments              | - Political cartoons, usually drawn by syndicated cartoonists  
- Other visual arguments (photographs, drawings, graphics, ads), usually accompanied by verbal text | - Make strong emotional appeals often reducing complex ideas to one powerful perspective (see Chapter 9) |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Explanation and Examples</th>
<th>Stylistic Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speeches and</td>
<td>Political speeches, keynote speeches at professional meetings, informal speeches at</td>
<td>Usually organized clearly with highlighted claim, supporting reasons, and transitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PowerPoint</td>
<td>hearings, interviews, business presentations</td>
<td>Accompanying PowerPoint slides designed to highlight structure, display evidence in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>presentations</td>
<td>Often made available via transcription in newspapers or on Web sites</td>
<td>graphics, mark key points, and sometimes provide humor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In business or government settings, often accompanied by PowerPoint slides</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documentary</td>
<td>Formerly nonfiction reporting, documentary films now range widely from efforts to</td>
<td>Often use extended visual arguments, combined with interviews and voice-overs, to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>films</td>
<td>document reality objectively to efforts to persuade viewers to adopt the filmmaker's</td>
<td>influence as well as inform viewers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>perspective or take action</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Usually cost less to produce than commercial films and lack special effects</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cover topics such as art, science, and economic, political, environmental, and military</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>crises</td>
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**Authorial Purpose and Audience**

A democratic society depends on the lively exchange of ideas—people with stakes in issues and different perspectives advocating for their positions. In reconstructing the rhetorical context of an argument, consider how any given writer is spurred to write by a motivating occasion and by the desire to change the views of a particular audience. Individuals often write arguments addressing personal or workplace issues. For public issues, the following list identifies the wide range of writers, as well as cartoonists, filmmakers, and others, who are apt to produce arguments.

- **Lobbyists and advocacy groups.** Lobbyists and advocacy groups commit themselves to a cause, often with passion, and produce avidly partisan arguments aimed at persuading voters, legislators, government agencies, and other decision makers. They often maintain advocacy Web sites, buy advertising space in newspapers and magazines, and lobby legislators face-to-face.
Legislators, political candidates, and government officials. Whenever new regulations, or government policies are proposed, staffers do research and white papers recommending positions on an issue. Often these are available on the Web.

Business professionals, labor union leaders, and bankers. Business people often try to influence public opinion in ways that support corporate business interests, whereas labor union officials support wage structures favorable to union members. Typically businesspeople produce "corporate image" advertisements, send white papers to legislators, or write op-ed pieces that frame issues from a business perspective, whereas labor unions produce arguments favorable to workers.

Lawyers and judges. Many controversial issues are entangled in legal matters. Lawyers write briefs supporting their clients' cases. Sometimes lawyers or experts not directly connected to a case, particularly law professors, file "frivolous briefs" aimed at influencing the decision of judges. Finally, journalists write court opinions explaining their decisions on a case.

Media commentators. Many controversial issues are in the news and attract the attention of media commentators (journalists, editorial writers, syndicated columnists, bloggers, political cartoonists) who write articles and blogs or op-ed pieces on the issue or produce editorial cartoons, filtering their arguments through the perspective of their own political views.

Professional freelance or staff writers. Some of the most thoughtful analysis of public issues are composed by freelance or staff writers for public forum magazines such as Atlantic Monthly, The Nation, Ms., The National Review, The New York Times, or for online news sites or blogs such as The Daily Kos or Little League Footballs. These can range from in-depth background pieces to arguments with a highly persuasive aim.

Think tanks. Because today many political, economic, and social issues are complex, policy makers and commentators often rely on research institutions called think tanks to supply statistical studies and in-depth investigation of problems. These think tanks range across the political spectrum, from conservative institutions such as the Hoover Institution, the Heritage Foundation) or libertarian (the Cato Institute) to the centrist or liberal (the Brookings Institution, the Pew Foundation, or the Economic Policy Institute). They usually maintain many-layered Web sites that can include background on research writers, recent publications, and archives of publications, including policy statements and white papers.

Scholars and academics. College professors play a public role through scholarly research, contributing data, studies, and analyses to public debates. Scholarly research differs substantially from advocacy argument in its systematic attempt to arrive at the best answers to questions based on the full examination of relevant data. Scholarly research is usually published in refereed academic journals rather than in popular magazines.

Independent and commercial filmmakers. Testifying to the growing popularity of film and its power to involve people in issues, documentary filmmakers...
reflect on issues of the day, and commercial filmmakers often embed arguments within their dramatic storytelling. The global film industry is adding international perspectives as well.

Citizens and students. Engaged citizens influence social policy through letters, contributions to advocacy Web sites, guest editorials for newspapers, blogs, and speeches in public forums. Students also write for university communities, present their work at undergraduate research conferences, and influence public opinion by writing to political leaders and decision makers.

Determining Degree of Advocacy

As you read any given source connected to your issue, try to determine whether it is a background piece that provides the context for an issue, an overview article that tries to summarize the various positions in the controversy, or an argument that supports a position. If it is an argument, also try to determine its degree of advocacy along the continuum from "truth seeking" to "persuasion" shown in Figure 1.5 (page 11). It is important to know, for example, whether a blog that you are reading appears on Daily Kos (a liberal blog site) or on Little Green Footballs (a conservative blog site). Particularly pay attention to how an argument selects and frames evidence—a rhetorical reading skill that we cover in depth in Chapter 5, pages 95–101.

The background we have just provided about the genres of argument, a writer's purpose and audience, and a text's degree of advocacy will help you situate arguments in their rhetorical context. When you encounter any argumentative text, whether reprinted in a textbook or retrieved through your own library and Web research, use the following guide questions to help you read the text rhetorically. This same skill is covered in more depth in Chapter 8, pages 154–159.

Questions for Reading Texts Rhetorically

1. What genre of argument is this? How do the conventions of that genre help determine the depth, complexity, and even appearance of the argument?
2. Who is the author? What are the author's credentials and what is his or her investment in the issue?
3. What audience is he or she writing for?
4. What motivating occasion prompted the writing? The motivating occasion could be a current event, a crisis, pending legislation, a recently published alternative view, or another ongoing problem.
5. What is the author's purpose? The purpose could range from strong advocacy to inquiring truth seeker (analogous to the continuum from persuasion to truth seeking discussed in Chapter 1, page 11).
6. What information about the publication or source (magazine, newspaper, advocacy Web site) helps explain the writer's perspective or the structure and style of the argument?
7. What is the writer’s angle of vision? By angle of vision, we mean the selective seeing through which the writer is approaching the left out from this argument? What does this author not see? (See pages 95–101, discusses how angle of vision operates in the selection of evidence.)

This rhetorical knowledge becomes important in helping you select voices and genres of argument when you are exploring an issue. No Makens makes use of her awareness of rhetorical context in her exploration of pages 44–50.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION Placing Readings in Their Rhetorical Context

Find two recent arguments on the subject of minimum wage* or on any topic specified by your instructor. Your arguments should (1) represent different viewpoints; (2) represent different kinds of arguers (syndicated newspaper columnists, freelance magazine writers, scholars, and so forth). You can find your arguers in any of these places:

- In magazines: news commentary/public affairs magazines or niche magazines
- On the Web: on Web sites for think tanks, advocacy organizations, or blogs
- In newspapers: local, regional, or national

For each argument, answer the “Questions for Reading Texts Rhetorically” at the end of the chapter. Then share your findings with classmates.

Reading to Believe an Argument’s Claims

2.3 To read an argument, you need to develop an empathic perspective to believe the argument.

A powerful strategy for reading an argument rhetorically is to focus on the spirit of the believing and doubting game, beginning with “be-cause.” When you read to believe an argument, you practice what psychologist Carl Rogers calls empathic listening. Empathic listening requires that you see the world through the author’s eyes, temporarily adopt the author’s beliefs and values, and suspend your scepticism and biases in order to hear what the author is saying.

To illustrate what we mean by reading to believe, we will continue with our example of raising the minimum wage, a highly controversial issue. The following article, “The Pay Is Too Damn Low,” is by James Surowiecki, an American journalist who writes the “Financial Page” column in The New Yorker, a magazine with a wide readership. This article appeared in The New Yorker in August 2013. Please read the article carefully in preparation for the exercises and examples that follow.

*For help on how to find articles through Web or licensed database searches, see Chapter 15.
Apple alone. Yet Apple employs just 76,000 people, while the retailers, supermarkets, and restaurant chains employ 5.6 million. The grim truth of those numbers is that low wages are a big part of why these companies are able to stay profitable while offering low prices. Congress is currently considering a bill increasing the minimum wage to $10.10 over the next three years. That’s an increase that the companies can easily tolerate, and it would make a significant difference in the lives of low-wage workers. But that’s still a long way from turning these jobs into the kind of employment that can support a middle-class family. If you want to accomplish that, you have to change the entire way these companies do business. Above all, you have to get consumers to accept significantly higher, and steadily rising, prices. After decades in which we’ve grown used to cheap stuff, that won’t be easy.

Realistically, then, a higher minimum wage can be only part of the solution. We also need to expand the earned-income tax credit and strengthen the unemployment insurance system, including child care; (the advent of Obamacare will help in Fast-food jobs in Germany and the Netherlands are much better-paid than in the United States.) A stronger safety net makes workers much better workers. We also need many more of the “mix” we’re always hearing about. A recent report suggested that the government spend almost a trillion dollars over the next ten years repairing and upgrading the national infrastructure, which seems like a good place to start. We also need the economy as a whole to grow faster, which would both increase the supply of jobs and improve the bargaining power of low-wage workers. As Jared Bernstein, an economist at the Economic Policy Institute, told me, “The United States has a strong labor movement, and a tight job market.” It isn’t enough to get better. We need to create better jobs.

Summary Writing as a Way of Reading to Believe

One way to show that you have listened well to an article is to summarize its argument in your own words. A summary (also called an abstract, a précis, or a synopses) presents only a text’s major points and eliminates supporting details. Writers incorporate summaries of other writers’ views into their own arguments, either to support their own views or to represent alternative views that they intend to oppose. (When opposing someone else’s argument, writers often follow the template “Although X contends that [summary of X’s argument], I argue that ______.”) Summaries can be any length, depending on the writer’s purpose, but usually they range from a few sentences to one or two paragraphs. To maintain your own credibility, your summary should be as neutral and fair to that piece as possible.

To help you write an effective summary, we recommend the following steps:

Step 1: Read the argument for general meaning. Don’t judge it. Put your objections aside; just follow the writer’s meaning, trying to see the issue from the writer’s perspective. Try to adopt the writer’s values and belief system. Walk in the writer’s shoes.

Step 2: Reread the article slowly, writing brief does and says statements for each paragraph (or group of closely connected paragraphs). A does statement identifies a paragraph’s function, such as “summarizes an opposing view,” “introduces a supporting reason,” “gives an example,” or “uses statistics to support the previous
A says statement summarizes a paragraph's content. Your challenge in writing says statements is to identify the main idea in each paragraph and translate that idea into your own words, most likely condensing it at the same time. This process may be easier with an academic article that uses long, developed paragraphs headed by clear topic sentences than with more informal, journalistic articles that use shorter, less developed paragraphs. What follows are does and says statements for the first three paragraphs of Surowiecki's article:

**Does/Says Analysis of Surowiecki's Article**

**Paragraph 1:** Does: Gives examples of recent news stories about protests of low-wage workers. Says: Hard-to-organize, low-wage earners are now in the news demanding an increase in the minimum wage.

**Paragraph 2:** Does: Provides details about the workers’ grievances. Says: A weakening job market combined with low wages, lack of benefits, and mainly part-time hours keeps low-wage workers at poverty levels.

**Paragraph 3:** Does: Explains the changing demographics of those who hold low-wage jobs. Says: In the past, minimum-wage jobs were held primarily by teenagers or by women desiring part-time work to supplement family incomes, but today many primary breadwinners depend on minimum-wage jobs to support a family.

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**FOR CLASS DISCUSSION  Writing Does/Says Statements**

Working individually or in small groups, write does and says statements for the remaining paragraphs of Surowiecki's article.

**Step 3:** Examine your does and says statements to determine the major sections of the argument. Create a list of the major points (and subpoints) that must appear in a summary in order to represent that argument accurately. If you are visually oriented, you may prefer to make a diagram, flowchart, or scratch outline of the sections of Surowiecki's argument.

**Step 4:** Turn your list, outline, flowchart, or diagram into a prose summary. Typically, writers do this in one of two ways. Some start by joining all their says statements into a lengthy paragraph-by-paragraph summary and then prune it and streamline it. They combine ideas into sentences and then revise those sentences to make them clearer and more tightly structured. Others start with a one-sentence summary of the argument's thesis and major supporting reasons and then flesh it out with more supporting ideas. Your goal is to be as neutral and objective as possible by keeping your own response to the writer's ideas out of your summary. To be fair to the writer, you also need to cover all the writer's main points and give them the same emphasis as in the original article.

**Step 5:** Revise your summary until it is the desired length and is sufficiently clear, concise, and complete. Your goal is to spend your words wisely, making every word count. In a summary of several hundred words, you will often need transitions to indicate structure and create a coherent flow of ideas: "Surowiecki’s second point
is that...” or “Surowiecki concludes by...” However, don’t waste words meaningless transitions such as “Surowiecki goes on to say...” When you incorporate a summary into your own essay, you must distinguish that author’s from your own by using attributive tags (expressions such as “Surowiecki says” or “according to Surowiecki”). You must also put any directly borrowed words in quotation marks. Finally, you must cite the original author using appropriate conventions for documenting sources.

What follows are two summaries of Surowiecki’s article—a one-paragraph version and a one-sentence version—by student writer Trudie Makens. Trudie’s one-paragraph version illustrates the MLA documentation system, in which page numbers for direct quotations are placed in parentheses after the quotation and complete bibliographic information is placed in a Works Cited list at the end of the paper. See Chapter 17 for a complete explanation of the MLA and APA documentation systems.

**Trudie’s One-Sentence Summary of Surowiecki’s Argument**

In his *New Yorker* article “The Pay Is Too Damn Low,” James Surowiecki analyzes the grievances of workers at fast-food franchises, Walmart, or Target. In the past, it didn’t matter that these jobs were low-pay, part-time, and without benefits because they were held mainly by teenagers or married women seeking to supplement a husband’s wages. But today, says Surowiecki, a growing number of primary breadwinners depend on these poverty-level wages to support families. The problem stems from a “two-shift in the American economy” (26). While in 1960, “firms such as Ford, Standard and Bethlehem Steel employed huge numbers of well-paid workers while earning no profits” (26), nowadays America’s biggest employers are fast-food and retail companies with low profit margins. These companies depend on low-wage workers to keep their products cheap for the American consumer. Paying living wages to workers would completely change the business model, resulting in steadily rising prices. According to Surowiecki, raising the minimum wage is only one tool for fighting poverty. America also needs to create a social insurance system like that of Germany or the Netherlands. Surowiecki calls for an increase in earned income tax credit, universal health insurance, affordable child care, and investment of almost a trillion dollars in infrastructure to create middle-class jobs.

**Work Cited**


**Trudie’s One-Sentence Summary of Surowiecki’s Argument**

In his *New Yorker* article, “The Pay Is Too Damn Low,” James Surowiecki argues that raising the minimum wage is only a partial solution to the problem of poverty and needs to be supplemented with a European-style social security network including an increased earned income tax credit, universal health insurance, affordable child care, and investment of almost a trillion dollars in infrastructure to create good middle-class jobs.
Practicing Believing: Willing Your Own Belief in the Writer’s Views

Although writing an accurate summary of an argument shows that you have listened to it effectively and understood it, summary writing by itself doesn’t mean that you have actively tried to enter the writer’s worldview. Before we turn in the next section to doubting an argument, we want to stress the importance of believing it. Rhetorician Peter Elbow reminds us that before we critique a text, we should try to “dwell with” and “dwell in” the writer’s ideas—play the believing game—in order to “earn” our right to criticize.* He asserts, and we agree, that this use of the believing game to engage with strange, threatening, or unfamiliar views can lead to a deeper understanding and may provide a new vantage point on our own knowledge, assumptions, and values. To believe a writer and dwell with his or her ideas, find places in the text that resonate positively for you, look for values and beliefs you hold in common (however few), and search for personal experiences and values that affirm his or her argument.

Reading to Doubt

2.4 To read to doubt an argument’s claims

| After willing yourself to believe an argument, will yourself to doubt it. Turn your mental energies toward raising objections, asking questions, expressing skepticism, and withholding your assent. When you read as a doubter, you question the writer’s logic, the writer’s evidence and assumptions, and the writer’s strategies for developing the argument. You also think about what is not in the argument by noting what the author has glossed over, left unexplained, or left out entirely. You add a new layer of marginal notes, articulating what is bothering you, demanding proof, doubting evidence, challenging the author’s assumptions and values, and so forth. Writing your own notes helps you read a text actively, bringing your own voice into conversation with the author. |

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION  Raising Doubts about Surowiecki’s Argument

Return now to Surowiecki’s article and read it skeptically. Raise questions, offer objections, and express doubts. Then, working as a class or in small groups, list all the doubts you have about Surowiecki’s argument.

Now that you have doubted Surowiecki’s article, compare your questions and doubts to some raised by student writer Trudie Makens.

Trudie’s Doubts about Surowiecki’s Article

- In his second paragraph, Surowiecki outlines three workers’ grievances: “low wages, few (if any) benefits, and little full-time work.” But increasing the minimum wage addresses only one of the grievances. A higher minimum wage might make it less likely for a worker to receive benefits or obtain full-time rather than part-time work. Moreover, with a higher wage, large companies may try to maintain profits by cutting jobs.

Surowiecki asserts that large retailers and fast-food companies would absorb the cost of a higher minimum wage by raising prices on consumer goods. But if low-wage workers are also consumers, won't higher prices on previously cheap products defeat the benefits of a higher wage?

Though he ends his article by calling for a multifaceted solution to poverty, he does without offering a way to accomplish this goal. Where would the money come from in order to expand the earned income tax credit, strengthen the United States' current social insurance system, or invest in infrastructure? Further, how would the United States effectively implement and sustain these nationwide social programs without upsetting the already delicate economy?

In his article Surowiecki mentions several studies, but there is no way to tell if these widely respected studies or controversial ones. Would other studies, for example, conclude that low-wage workers today are responsible for 46 percent of their family's income?

These are only some of the objections that might be raised against Surowiecki's argument. The point here is that doubting as well as believing is a key part of the exploratory process and purpose. Believing takes you into the views of others so that you can expand your views and perhaps see them differently and modify or even change them. Doubting helps protect you from becoming overpowered by other arguments and teaches you to stand back, consider, and weigh points carefully, which also leads you to new questions and points you might want to explore further.

Thinking Dialectically

2.5 To delay closure by thinking dialectically

This chapter's final strategy—thinking dialectically to bring texts into conversation with each other—encompasses all the previous strategies and can have a powerful effect on your growth as a thinker and arguer. The term dialectic is associated with the German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, who postulated that each thesis prompts an opposing thesis (which he calls an "antithesis") and that the conflict between these views can lead thinkers to a new claim (a "synthesis") that incorporates aspects of both views. Dialectic thinking is the philosophical underpinning of the believing and doubting game, pushing us toward new and better ideas. As Peter Elbow puts it, "Because it's so hard to let go of an idea we are holding (or more to the point, an idea that's holding us), our best hope for leverage in learning to doubt such ideas is to take on different ideas."

This is why expert thinkers actively seek out alternative views—not to shout them down but to listen to them. If you were an arbitrator, you wouldn't settle a dispute between A and B on the basis of A's testimony only. You would also insist on hearing B's side of the story (and perhaps also C's and D's if they are stakeholders in the dispute). Dialectic thinking means playing ideas against each other, creating a tension that forces you to keep expanding your perspective. It helps you achieve the "mingling of minds" that we discussed in the introduction to this chapter.

As you listen to differing views, try to identify sources of disagreement among arguers, which often fall into two categories: (1) disagreement about the facts of the case and (2) disagreement about underlying values, beliefs, or assumptions. We saw these disagreements in Chapter 1 in the conversation about phthalates in children’s toys. At the level of facts, disputants disagreed about the amount of phthalates a baby might ingest when chewing a rubber toy or about the quantity of ingested phthalates needed to be harmful. At the level of values, disputants disagreed on the amount of risk that must be present in a free market economy before a government agency should ban a substance. As you try to determine your own position on an issue, consider what research you might have to do to resolve questions of fact; also try to articulate your own underlying values, beliefs, and assumptions.

As you consider multiple points of view on an issue, try using the following questions to promote dialectic thinking:

Questions to Promote Dialectic Thinking

1. What would writer A say to writer B?
2. After I read writer A, I thought _____; however, after I read writer B, my thinking on this issue had changed in these ways: _____.
3. To what extent do writer A and writer B disagree about facts and interpretations of facts?
4. To what extent do writer A and writer B disagree about underlying beliefs, assumptions, and values?
5. Can I find any areas of agreement, including shared values and beliefs, between writer A and writer B?
6. What new, significant questions do these texts raise for me?
7. After I have wrestled with the ideas in these two texts, what are my current views on this issue?

Responding to questions like these—either through class discussion or through exploratory writing—can help you work your way into a public controversy. Earlier in this chapter you read James Surowiecki’s article expressing liberal support for raising the minimum wage and enacting other government measures to help the poor. Now consider an article expressing a quite different point of view, an opinion piece written by Michael Saltsman, the research director at the Employment Policies Institute—a pro-business, free market think tank opposed to raising the minimum wage. It appeared in The Huffington Post on April 26, 2013. We ask you to read the article and then use the preceding questions to stimulate dialectic thinking about Surowiecki versus Saltsman.

FOR WRITING AND DISCUSSION  Practicing Dialectic Thinking with MyWritingLab™

Two Articles

Individual task: Freewrite your responses to the preceding questions, in which Surowiecki is writer A and Saltsman is writer B. Group task: Working as a whole class or in small groups, share your responses to the two articles, guided by the dialectic questions.