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### MAKING CONNECTIONS: IMPROVING SCHOOLS

Everyone seems to agree that schools in the United States need improvement. Whether you attended public or private schools or both — and even if you were schooled at home or in another country — you have had extensive experience in schooling and could be considered an expert.

In her essay, Athena Alexander indicates that in passing the No Child Left Behind Act, Congress thought that the biggest problem with schooling was the quality of education, particularly in math, reading, and writing. With two or three classmates, discuss what you consider the most pressing problem in the public school system, based on your experience and/or observation. Begin by taking turns briefly saying what you think needs to be solved. Then, together discuss the following questions:

- Does your group agree on what the most pressing problem is?
- If the group disagrees, what is the basis of your disagreement — experience, values, ideals, goals, or something else?
- If you agree, why do you agree? Is it because you share the same experience, values, ideals, goals, or something else?

### ANALYZING WRITING STRATEGIES

#### Basic Features

#### ● An Informative Introduction to the Issue and Opposing Positions

If an issue is current and controversial, there is a good chance that readers will already be familiar with it and will not need much of an introduction. Nevertheless, writers of common ground essays tend to explain the issue anyway. They do so because they want to reframe the issue for readers in a way that prepares them for the analysis to come.

For example, Jeremy Bernard introduces the argument about banning steroids in baseball by reminding readers of the nostalgia surrounding baseball and its association with a more innocent, perhaps simpler period in American history. This association of baseball, America, and innocence sets the stage for the debate about ethics. It even makes the metaphor of a level playing field seem to be literally about baseball.

To analyze how Alexander frames her issue, try the following:

- Reread paragraphs 1–2 and highlight the information Alexander provides. Focus especially on how she explains the criterion of “adequate yearly progress” (AYP) and how she uses the example of Georgia.
- Then reread paragraphs 8–10 to see how Alexander’s analysis of the argument between Weaver and Paige depends on her earlier explanation of AYP.
- Write a few sentences about Alexander’s way of framing the issue around the concept of AYP. What does she tell readers in the opening paragraphs that prepares them for her later analysis of the argument about AYP?

### ● A Probing Analysis

Although common ground essays seek ways to bridge differences, sometimes the analysis does nothing more than reveal how deep the disagreement is because it is based on fundamental values and beliefs, political ideology, or moral principles. For example, in her essay on torture, Melissa Mae discovered that the authors of the two essays she chose to analyze have very different philosophical or ideological perspectives on torture. Johnson thinks in terms of moral absolutes: Torture is simply wrong, always, in every situation. Bagaric and Clarke, on the other hand, advocate situational ethics: They think that the situation or context determines whether torture is right or wrong. These ways of thinking about morality appear to be irreconcilable.

To examine Alexander’s analysis, try the following:

- Reread paragraphs 11 and 12, where Alexander analyzes Weaver’s political argument about school vouchers. What ideologies and/or value systems seem to underlie opposing positions on vouchers?
- Notice that in addition to analyzing Weaver’s essay, Alexander also looked up background information on school vouchers in Wikipedia. Many people think Wikipedia is not a reliable source because it is not written by experts and can easily be changed by readers with a political agenda of their own. As you examine this part of Alexander’s analysis, consider whether she uses the information she gleaned from Wikipedia responsibly, and whether she should have used it at all.
- Write a couple of sentences explaining what you learned from Alexander’s analysis of Weaver’s argument about school vouchers. Add another sentence or two evaluating Alexander’s use of Wikipedia as a source.

### ◆ A Fair and Impartial Presentation

To establish themselves as fair and impartial in their analysis, writers of common ground essays try to use neutral language in describing the people whose arguments they are discussing.

All the writers in this chapter describe the authors respectfully, with a few simple words identifying their professions. Melissa Mae, for example, describes Mirko Bagaric as a law professor, Julie Clarke as a law lecturer, and Kermit D. Johnson as “a retired Army Chaplain” (par. 2). Similarly, Alexander describes Rod Paige as “the secretary of education under President George W. Bush from 2001 to 2005” and Reg Weaver as the “president of the National Education Association, a union representing teachers” (par. 3). Alexander’s descriptions establish the authors’ credentials without evaluation or comment. But she does let readers know something about the authors’ political affiliations, information that is significant because of the politics surrounding the No Child Left Behind Act. Paige, as she explains, wrote his essay defending the No Child Left Behind Act when he was the secretary of education; Weaver wrote his when he was president of the teachers’ union. As spokesmen for these different constituencies, Paige and Weaver represent two important political points of view.

Writers also try to use descriptive but unbiased language when they introduce quotations. For example, Jeremy Bernard uses verbs like *concludes*, *argues*, *cites*, *expresses*, and *assumes*. Melissa Mae uses *writes*, *thinks*, *asserts*, *argues*, and *labels*. With these descriptive verbs, Bernard and Mae do not reveal their attitude toward the authors or what they wrote. They express no judgments, but act as impartial reporters.

To assess Alexander’s fairness and impartiality, try the following:

- Reread paragraphs 4–6 and highlight the verbs Alexander uses to describe Weaver’s and Paige’s writing. Consider whether Alexander’s word choices reveal her attitude or judgment and whether she comes across as fair and unbiased.
- Write a sentence or two explaining what you learned from analyzing Alexander’s word choices.

### ◆ A Readable Plan

To help readers track the points of agreement and disagreement, writers often use **comparative transitions**, words and phrases that identify similarities or differences in the texts being analyzed. Transitions indicating similarity include *both*, *like*, *similarly*, and *in the same way*. Transitions to indicate difference include *unlike*, *however*, *although*, and *alternatively*. Here are a few examples from Jeremy Bernard and Melissa Mae’s essays:

Mitchell, on the other hand, . . . (Bernard, par. 11)

Whereas Bagaric and Clarke think saving lives justifies torture, however, Johnson believes renouncing torture saves lives. (Mae, par. 3)

Bagaric and Clarke, in their turn, . . . (Mae, par. 4)

Bagaric and Clarke's take on it is somewhat more complicated. (Mae, par. 7)

Note that in these examples, Bernard and Mae use the authors' last names as a shortcut to help readers keep track of who wrote what. Occasionally, however, a writer will use pronouns, as in this example:

They agree that the medical evidence is inconclusive. . . . But they disagree on . . . (Bernard, par. 4).

Occasionally, writers also use labels (highlighted) to identify different positions:

Although Bagaric and Clarke continue to take a **situational view** of torture (considering the morality of an act in light of its particular situation) and Johnson does not waver in seeing torture in terms of **moral absolutes**. . . . (Mae, par. 10)

Using labels like these can be helpful if the writer goes on to discuss the different positions. (But you can see that even in this example, Mae is careful to use the authors' names so as not to confuse readers.)

In addition to comparative transitions, writers often use **transitional words and phrases** to introduce the following:

- an additional item: *as well as, in addition to, first . . . second*
- an illustration: *for example, specifically*
- a restatement or clarification: *that is, in other words, to put it differently*
- a cause or result: *because, therefore, consequently, so*
- a conclusion or summary: *in conclusion, clearly, thus*

To analyze Alexander's use of transitional words and phrases to make her essay readable, try the following:

- Reread paragraphs 5 and 6 and highlight the transitions Alexander uses. For each transition you highlight, note its function.
- Write a sentence or two explaining what you have learned about Alexander's use of transitions in these paragraphs.

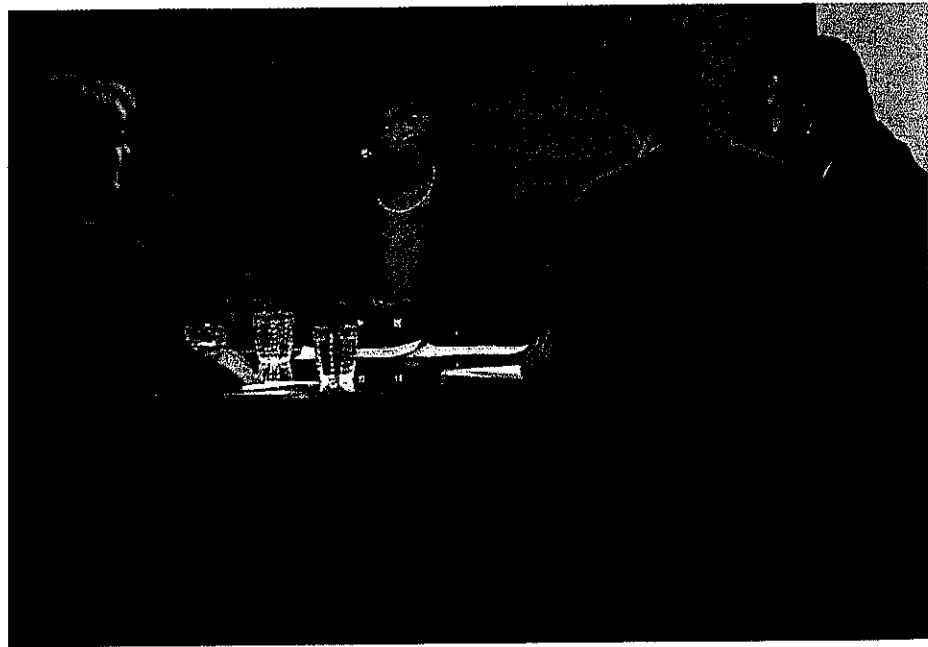
You might be interested in writing about other issues related to NCLB — for example, the quality of teaching in the public schools, the value of standardized testing, private versus public schooling, or school vouchers. What basis for common ground might bridge differences on one of these topics? The Collaborative Activity on pp. 187–88 also raises a number of school issues you might consider: sororities and fraternities, college athletics, community service, and the teaching of evolution. Your group discussion about one of these issues could become the basis for your common ground essay.

### CONSIDERING TOPICS FOR YOUR OWN ESSAY

## Beyond the Traditional Essay: Finding Common Ground


The search for common ground is in evidence in many areas of our culture. Professional mediators are in constant demand for a wide range of business negotiations and for resolution of conflicts ranging from the personal (as, for example, when a counselor helps a couple resolve marital difficulties) to the global (for instance, when the United Nations weighs in on an international conflict). Of course, efforts to find common ground require the prior, full expression of opposing viewpoints.

Perhaps the most familiar examples of the expression of opposing points of view come from television, where talk shows like *Washington Week*, *Real Time with Bill Maher*, and *The View* are explicitly presented as contexts for a wide-ranging discussion of current issues. Online, sites such as *bloggingheads.tv* and *Opposing Views* ([www.opposingviews.com](http://www.opposingviews.com)) offer commentary from experts with opposing perspectives on current issues. While these media projects vary in their commitment to a "fair and unbiased" presentation, most of them do exhibit the other basic features common in traditional essays that search for common ground: a moderator or host typically introduces the issue and often highlights points of similarity and difference in the views expressed by participants; the structure of the show or site and the host's commentary provide a logical (or at least conventionally perceptible) plan.



As you work on your own project, you might want to consult some of these projects, both for factual information and for inspiration. If the format in which you are working allows for it — if, for example, you are creating a poster, Web site, or video — you should consider taking advantage of the strategies available to those working in multimedia — for example, by embedding artifacts that are relevant to the positions you are explaining. (Always remember to properly document any material you might use that was created by someone else.)

May 7, 2009



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**highlight reels**

We're going to try to forget we heard that, Glenn.

In times of crisis, liberals and conservatives find common ground.

A few kind words for the unfairly maligned British nobility.

Excerpts of Bloggingheads.tv dialogues available at **The New York Times**

The ticking time bomb that could demolish John McCain's re-election chances in 2010.


Where do bloggingheads get breaking news? From other heads, of course.

That's why we love you, **Rethan Salam**.

How to dispose of those newfangled eco-friendly light bulbs: two schools of thought.

Pirates of yore, champions of affirmative action.

It's a Wonderful Revisionist Life.  
Reconsidering Pottersville.



JOHN MCWEIGHTLER

Against a truth commission for torture (06:29)  
America's love affair with vengeance (04:01)  
Is the financial crisis making Obama weaker or stronger? (02:49)  
John warns Obama: Symbolism won't defuse terrorism (06:11)  
Glenn deploras the "masturbatory" news media (03:34)  
Is it time to let the Voting Rights Act die? (09:10)

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# Guide to Writing

## The Writing Assignment

Write an essay analyzing two or more essays taking different positions on an issue. Your purpose is to analyze the essays to understand their authors' main points of disagreement and to suggest ways to build common ground on shared values, concerns, needs, and interests.

This Guide to Writing will help you apply what you have learned about how writers present an issue, analyze the positions others take on it, strive for fairness in presenting their analysis, and write a readable essay communicating their ideas. The Guide is divided into five sections with various activities in each section:

- Invention and Research
- Planning and Drafting
- Critical Reading Guide
- Revising
- Editing and Proofreading

The Guide to Writing is designed to support you through the writing process, from finding an issue and essays arguing different positions on it, to editing your finished essay. Your instructor may require you to follow it from beginning to end. Working through the Guide in this way will help you — as it has helped many other college students — write a thoughtful, fully developed, polished essay.


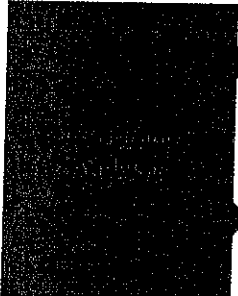


If, however, your instructor allows it, you can decide on the order in which you will do the activities in the Guide to Writing. For example, the Invention and Research section includes activities to help you choose a set of argument essays to write about, analyze them, and research the issue, among other things. Obviously, choosing essays must precede the other activities, but you may come to the Guide with essays already in mind, and you may choose to research the issue further before turning to an analysis of the essays. In fact, you may find your response to one of the invention activities expanding into a draft before you have had a chance to do any of the other activities. That is a good thing — but you should later flesh out your draft by going back to the activities you skipped and layering the new material into your draft.

The following chart will help you find answers to many of the questions you might have about planning, drafting, and revising an essay finding common ground. The page references in the Where to Look column refer to examples from the readings and activities in the Guide to Writing.

To learn about using the *Guide* e-book for invention and drafting, go to [bedfordstmartins.com/theguide](http://bedfordstmartins.com/theguide).

## Starting Points: Finding Common Ground

◆◆◆◆ Basic Features

	Question	Where to Look
<b>Choosing an Issue and Opposing Arguments to Write About</b>	How do I come up with an issue to write about?	Choosing a Set of Argument Essays to Write About (p. 214) Using the Web to Find a Set of Arguments on an Issue (p. 214) Considering Topics for Your Own Essay (pp. 201, 209)
	What is my purpose in writing?	Defining Your Purpose for Your Readers (p. 220) Clarifying Your Purpose and Readers (p. 221)
	How do I interest and inform readers about the issue?	Analyzing Writing Strategies (pp. 198–99, 206–7) Thinking about Your Readers (p. 217) Introducing the Issue and Opposing Positions (p. 221) Writing the Opening Sentences (pp. 224–25)
	How can I give readers an overview of the debate?	Analyzing the Essays (pp. 216–19) Researching the Issue (pp. 219–20)
	How do I find points of disagreement and agreement to analyze?	Annotate the Essays: Criteria for Analyzing the Essays (pp. 216–17) List Promising Points (p. 219)
	How do I analyze them?	Analyzing Writing Strategies (pp. 199–207) Analyzing the Essays (pp. 216–19) Exploring Points of Agreement and Disagreement (p. 219) Try Out an Analysis (p. 219)
	How do I avoid entering the debate myself?	Analyzing Writing Strategies (pp. 199, 208)
	How can I make my essay clear?	Analyzing Writing Strategies (pp. 200, 208–9)



## Invention and Research

The following invention activities are easy to complete and take only a few minutes. Spreading out the activities over several days will stimulate your creativity, enabling you to analyze the arguments thoughtfully and discover ways to bridge their disagreements. Remember to keep a written record of your invention work: you will need it when you draft the essay and later when you revise it.

### Choosing a Set of Argument Essays to Write About

If your instructor has not assigned one of the debates from the Appendix to this chapter or from the companion Web site for this book at [bedfordstmartins.com/theguide](http://bedfordstmartins.com/theguide), choose one that you already know about, that connects to your personal experience or interests, or that you think is especially important.

### Getting an Overview

*Read the essays to get a basic understanding of each author's position and supporting argument. Do not expect to understand everything on your first reading, even if you are already fairly knowledgeable about the issue and the way people typically argue about it. As you read, make notes about the following:*

- points on which the authors disagree and points on which they agree
- values, ideals, interests, and concerns that seem to be important to each author
- ideas you have about how the authors might come together around shared values and ideals or common concerns, interests, and goals

#### Criteria for Choosing a Set of Arguments to Analyze

A Checklist

The set of argument essays should

- address the same controversial issue, which must be arguable—that is, a matter of opinion on which there is no absolute proof or authority on which everyone can rely
- take different positions on the issue
- offer thoughtful arguments supporting the position
- anticipate and respond to opposing arguments
- be interesting to you and worth the time and effort you will need to invest

### Using the Web to Find or Explore a Set of Arguments on an Issue

Your instructor may allow or even require you to find your own argument essays to analyze, rather than assigning those in the Appendix or on the companion

Web site, in which case the Internet will likely prove an important resource. However, even if you are working from essays we recommend, exploring the Internet can enrich your understanding of the issue. Moreover, the Web provides a rich repository of information, including photographs and music, which you might be able to use to create a richly detailed, multimedia text for your readers.

Here are some suggestions:

- Search Web sites such as ProCon.org, publicagenda.org, cqresearcher.org, or usa.gov for information and arguments.
- Do a Google search including keywords such as *current debates*, *controversial issues*, *arguments* or *debate* plus your issue.

Download or copy any information or quotations you might be able to use as well as any visuals you might include in your essay, being sure to get the information necessary to cite any online sources. (See p. 774–76 for the MLA citation format for electronic sources.)

### Testing Your Choice

If you have the option of choosing a set of argument essays to analyze, pause now to decide whether you want to stay with the essays you have chosen or consider choosing different essays.

Consider these questions:

- Does the issue continue to engage your interest?
- Do you have a basic understanding of the issue and the arguments made in these essays?
- Have you found points on which the authors disagree and points on which they agree or could potentially agree?
- Have you begun to understand the motivating factors such as values, ideals, interests, and concerns in each author's argument?

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Get together with two or three other students and take turns discussing your choice.

**Presenters:** Begin by identifying the issue and briefly summarizing the position argued in each of the essays you are analyzing.

**Listeners:** Tell the presenter what seem to be the motivating factors such as the values, concerns, or interests at the heart of the debate and where you see the possibility of finding common ground.

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**A Collaborative Activity:**  
Testing Your Choice

### ◆ Analyzing the Essays

To understand the points of disagreement and to find common ground in the argument essays you have chosen, you need to read them closely and critically. The following activities will help you find and annotate the essays' key features and motivating factors and keep track of what you find by filling in a chart. This process of annotating and charting will be helpful as you plan, organize, and draft your essay. Keep in mind that most writers need to reread all or parts of the essays several times to get all they can out of their analysis.

### Annotate the Essays

Either on paper or electronically, annotate the essays you have chosen, identifying and labeling the key features of each essay, along with the author's motivating factors, listed in the "Criteria for Analyzing the Essays" box below. (Do not feel you must annotate every item on these two lists — some might not be relevant, or might not be present in a particular essay.)

#### CRITERIA FOR ANALYZING THE ESSAYS

##### Features of the Argument

- **ISSUE.** How does the writer define or frame the issue?
- **POSITION.** What is the writer's opinion (thesis statement)?
- **ARGUMENT.** What are the main reasons and kinds of evidence (facts, statistics, examples, authorities, and so on) the writer uses to support his/her position?
- **COUNTERARGUMENT.** What opposing arguments does the writer anticipate? Does the writer **concede** (agree with) or **refute** (disagree with) these arguments?

##### Motivating Factors

Factors such as the following may be stated explicitly or implied. If you find any other factor that you consider important but that is not on the list, give it a name and include it in your annotations.

- **VALUES — MORAL, ETHICAL, OR RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLES** (for example, justice, equality, the public good, "do unto others," social responsibility, stewardship of the natural environment)
- **IDEOLOGY AND IDEALS** (for example, democratic ideals — everyone is created equal and has the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; capitalist ideals; socialist ideals; feminist ideals)
- **NEEDS AND INTERESTS** (for example, food, shelter, work, respect, privacy, choice)
- **FEARS AND CONCERNS** (for example, regarding safety, socioeconomic status, power, consequences of actions taken or not taken)

- **PRIORITIES AND AGENDAS** about what is most important or urgent (for example, whether law and order is more important than securing justice and equality; whether the right to life trumps all other concerns; whether combating global warming ought to be a principal concern of our government)
- **BINARY THINKING** (the assumption that things are “either/or” — for example, that only one of two outcomes is possible; that there can only be winners or losers in a situation; that only two positions are possible; that the world is divided into “us” against “them”)

### Fill in the Chart

Creating a chart like the one on p. 218 will make it easy for you to locate points of agreement and disagreement in the essays you are analyzing:

1. At the top of the second and third columns, identify the essays you are analyzing. (If you are analyzing more than two essays, add another column.)
2. Begin by charting the argument’s key features. Add paragraph numbers directing you to the places in each essay where the key feature is evident. Add brief notes or jot down key phrases to jog your memory.
3. Chart the argument’s motivating factors, adding paragraph numbers and notes (if appropriate and helpful).
4. Chart any additional significant factors you might find, naming them appropriately.

Remember that you will not necessarily find evidence of *every* key feature or motivating factor in each essay.

### Thinking about Your Readers

Now that you have a good understanding of the argument essays you will be discussing, take a few minutes to write about your readers. The following questions will help you identify them and develop a better understanding of them:

- Who are my readers?
- What are they likely to know and think about the issue?
- How can I interest them in it — for example, by connecting it to their experience or concerns, or by citing statistics or vivid anecdotes?
- Are there specialized terms or concepts I will have to explain to them? Do the essays give me enough information to define these terms, or will I have to search out further information?

An electronic version of the blank chart is available on the companion Web site at [bedfordstmartins.com/theguide](http://bedfordstmartins.com/theguide).

To see an example of student writer Melissa Mae’s annotations chart, turn to pp. 239–40 of the Writer at Work section.

## My Annotations Chart

		Essay 1:	Essay 2:
<b>Features of the Argument</b>	ISSUE		
	POSITION (THESIS)		
	ARGUMENT (Main supporting reasons and evidence)		
	COUNTERARGUMENT (Refutation, concession)		
<b>Motivating Factors</b>	VALUES (Moral, ethical, religious)		
	IDEOLOGY AND IDEALS (Cultural, legal, political)		
	NEEDS AND INTERESTS		
	FEARS AND CONCERNS		
	PRIORITIES AND AGENDAS		
	BINARY THINKING		
<b>Other Factors</b>			

### ◆ Exploring Points of Agreement and Disagreement

These activities will help you find points of agreement and disagreement in the essays and try out your analysis on one or two of them. As you write about the points, you may find you are actually writing parts of a rough draft. Do not censor yourself, but go ahead and see where your exploratory writing leads you.

#### List Promising Points

*Make a list of promising points of agreement and disagreement in the essays you are analyzing.* For your analysis, you probably will not need to discuss more than two or three interesting points because you will need to examine them in some detail. Nevertheless, generating a substantial list of points now will give you the luxury of choice.

Generating a substantial list may also lead you to discover less obvious potential points of agreement that will help your readers see the issue in a new way. The most effective analyses often go beyond the obvious, finding common ground where most people would imagine agreement is impossible.

You might begin your list by reviewing the notes you wrote for the Getting an Overview activity (p. 213). Also, review your Annotations Chart. Look for places where the same reasons, evidence, or motivational factors are used in both essays. For example, you may find, as Melissa Mae did, that the essays use a similar scenario to argue different positions or that they both make a moral argument. Or you may find, as Jeremy Bernard did, that both writers are concerned about fairness.

#### Try Out an Analysis

*Choose a point of agreement or disagreement that looks promising, and write a page analyzing it.* If the point appears to be one on which the writers disagree, consider whether the disagreement when examined might reveal a potential shared value, concern, or interest. If the point is one on which the writers already agree, think about the significance of the agreement and whether it could be extended to include other points as well.

You will probably need to go back into both essays and reread the relevant paragraphs. As you do, consider the following:

- how the key feature or motivating factor fits into the essay as a whole
- how it is used to advance the argument
- whether it is central or peripheral
- whether the writers use it in similar or different ways
- whether the writers use comparable words, examples, and details
- whether there are words, phrases, or sentences you could quote (and what you would say about the quotes you use)

#### Researching the Issue

It may help to gather some background information about the issue and the authors. Researching the history of the issue may help you introduce it in a way that captures your readers' interest. As you try out your analysis and draft other parts of the essay,

you may also discover that you have questions that can be answered with library or Internet research. For example, Athena Alexander noticed that both writers referred to “vouchers,” a word she did not understand. She Googled the word and found information that helped her understand the central role vouchers play in the politics of the argument on reforming public education.

Consider beginning research in your college library, where a librarian can give you advice about the online catalog and databases. Also consult Chapters 23 and 24 for help finding and citing sources.

### Designing Your Document

Think about whether your readers might benefit from design features such as headings or numbered or bulleted lists or from visuals such as drawings, graphs, tables, or photographs. Earlier in the chapter, for example, Jeremy Bernard uses headings to introduce his two main points and Melissa Mae displays a graph to illustrate an observation brought up by one of the authors she is writing about. You might also look back at the scenario on p. 185 describing a proposal for “smart growth” in a formerly rural area in Washington State, and then read the Thinking about Document Design on p. 228 to see how this proposal was presented at a conference.

For more information on document design, see Chapter 21.

### Defining Your Purpose for Your Readers

*Write a few sentences defining your purpose.* Recall that in an earlier invention activity you identified your readers and considered what they know and think about the issue you are analyzing. Given these readers, try now to define your purpose by considering the following questions:

- How can I interest my readers?
- If they are likely to have their own opinions about the issue, how much resistance should I expect they will have to my analysis of the points of disagreement?
- How can I make my ideas about the potential for common ground intriguing for my readers?

### Formulating a Tentative Thesis Statement

*Write one or more sentences that could serve as a thesis statement for your essay.* These sentences from the end of paragraph 3 in Athena Alexander’s essay assert her thesis:

Paige and Weaver differ on the role standardized testing should play in assessing students’ progress and the NCLB’s effectiveness. Ultimately, however, their disagreement is political — with Paige accusing NCLB critics of being cynical and Weaver accusing its supporters of having a hidden agenda.

As you write your own tentative thesis statement, think about how you could help readers see the important ways the writers disagree and also possibly on what basis they might be able to agree. Although you may want to revise your thesis statement as you draft your essay, trying to state it now will give you focus and direction as you plan and draft your essay.

## Planning and Drafting

The following guidelines will help you get the most out of your invention work, determine specific goals for your essay, and write a promising first draft.

### Refining Your Purpose and Setting Goals

Successful writers are always looking beyond the next sentence to their larger goals for the whole essay. Indeed, that next sentence is easier to write if you keep larger goals in mind. The following questions can help you set these goals. Consider each one now, and then return to them as necessary while you write.

### Clarifying Your Purpose and Readers

- Who are my readers, and what can I realistically hope to accomplish by analyzing this issue?
- Should I assume my readers may not understand the points on which people disagree?
- Should I assume they have not considered seriously points on which people may agree?
- Can I inspire readers to think critically about their own position on the issue by helping them understand some of the motivating factors that could be used as common ground?
- How can I gain readers' confidence? Can I keep my own views to myself and present the opposing positions in a fair and balanced way, as all of the writers in this chapter try to do?

### Introducing the Issue and Opposing Positions

- Should I place the issue in a historical context and indicate also that the issue is still unresolved, as all of the writers in this chapter try to do?
- Should I quote famous people readers may have heard of to help establish the issue's importance, as Bernard does?
- Should I try to clarify the issue by giving concrete examples, as Bernard and Mae do, or by defining terms, as Bernard and Alexander do?
- Should I introduce the authors of the opposing positions by name and also give their credentials, as all the writers do?

### Presenting Your Analysis

- Can I help readers understand what the significant points of disagreement and potential or actual points of agreement are, as all the writers try to do?
- Can I suggest that a point of disagreement may actually be based on shared values, as Mae does when she focuses on the importance of saving lives and Bernard does when he discusses fairness?



- Should I call attention to common needs and concerns, as Alexander does when she notes that both writers want to improve education?
- Should I mark where the writers are motivated by different political agendas, as Alexander does when she discusses privatizing education through school vouchers?
- Can I point to places where the writers rely on similar scenarios, as Mae does, or other kinds of support, as Bernard and Alexander do?

### Striving for Fairness

- Can I avoid discussing my own view of the issue?
- Should I try to give roughly equal space to each position?
- Should I quote others rather than speak in my own voice?

### Making Your Plan Readable

- Should I forecast my main points early on, as all three writers do?
- Should I use the authors' names and repeat key words to help readers follow my analysis?
- Should I use comparative transitions to make it easy to see when I am comparing and contrasting the different arguments?

### The Ending

- Should I end by summarizing the major differences, as Alexander does?
- Should I remind readers of the common ground that exists between the different positions, as all the writers do?
- Should I discuss the possibilities for the future, as all the writers do?

### Outlining Your Draft

The goals that you have set should help you draft your essay, but first you might want to make a quick scratch outline of the points of agreement and disagreement between the authors that you expect to focus on. Your Annotations Chart plus the list you made under Exploring Points of Agreement and Disagreement should be particularly helpful. Use your outline to guide your drafting, but do not feel tied to it.

Here is an outline of Jeremy Bernard's essay. Remember that he divides his essay into two points — the health risk and fairness of using steroids — and under each point, he explains the ways in which the writers agree and disagree.

#### *Introduction*

*From age of innocence to steroids era*

*Issue: Should PEDs be banned by MLB?*

*Yes — George Mitchell, the MLB-sponsored Mitchell Report*

*No — Eric Walker's independent Web site, "Steroids, Other 'Drugs,' and Baseball"*

*Point 1. Health Risk: Should PEDs be banned because their health risk is significant?*

*Agreement*

*Medical evidence inconclusive*

*Risk of side effects exists*

*Risk to adolescents particularly serious*

*Disagreement*

*Risk to adults is likely grave (Mitchell) / likely not grave (Walker)*

*Adults should be prohibited from undergoing risk (Mitchell) / should be allowed to choose (Walker)*

*Point 2. Fairness/Level Playing Field: Should PEDs be banned because players who take them have an unfair advantage?*

*Agreement*

*Use of PEDs gives athletes an advantage*

*Unequal access is unfair, not a level playing field*

*Disagreement*

*Whose responsibility? MLB should set rules (Mitchell) / let athletes decide what's best for themselves (Walker)*

*The distinction between "natural" and "unnatural" advantages is clear and should be maintained (Mitchell) / the distinction is arbitrarily determined and needs rethinking (Walker)*

*Conclusion*

*Possibility of common ground based on shared love of baseball*

And here is an outline of the points of agreement and disagreement in the two essays Melissa Mae addresses in her analysis:

*Introduction*

*History: Abu Ghraib—present*

*Issue: Should the U.S. ever torture?*

*Yes — Mirko Bagaric and Julie Clarke, "A Case for Torture"*

*No — Kermit D. Johnson, "Inhuman Behavior"*

*Points of agreement (shared values)*

*Human life is precious*

*Torture is a moral issue*

*Morality is worth arguing about*

*Points of disagreement*

*Torture can be considered self-defense and therefore moral when innocent lives will be saved through its use (Bagaric and Clarke) / Torture is never moral (Johnson)*

*Torture saves lives (Bagaric and Clarke) / Torture endangers lives (Johnson)*

*The "ticking time bomb scenario" is real, though rare (Bagaric and Clarke) / The scenario is a Hollywood-fueled fantasy (Johnson)*

#### *Conclusion*

*Summarize: Bagaric and Clarke's situational ethics v. Johnson's moral absolutes  
Common ground possible based on shared values and morality*

The introduction to the issue, positions, and debaters could take from one to four paragraphs — Bernard's introduction takes two paragraphs and Mae's takes three. What is important is that the introductory paragraphs not dominate your analysis. The thesis statement is usually brief — sometimes only a sentence or two — and often serves also to forecast the main points of disagreement and agreement that the essay will address. The concluding paragraph in each of these essays is brief and evolves from the preceding discussion. In neither case does the writer simply summarize the main points of agreement and disagreement that were discussed in detail, although that could be useful for readers. What they do, though, is probably more important because it focuses on underlying motivating factors and the possibility of building on this foundation of common ground.

Consider any outlining that you do before you begin drafting to be tentative. As you draft, expect that your essay will likely depart from your original outline. In fact, it may help, especially if you are drafting the essay over several hours or days, to revise your outline to correspond with the changes you are making.

### **Drafting**

If you have not already begun to draft your essay, this section will help by suggesting how to write your opening sentences, and how to use the sentence strategy of introducing a quotation with a colon. Drafting is not always a smooth process, so do not be afraid to leave spaces where you do not know what to put in or to write notes to yourself about what you could do next. If you get stuck while drafting, go back over your invention writing: You may be able to copy and paste some of it into your evolving draft, or you may find that you need to do some additional invention to fill in details in your draft.

### **Writing the Opening Sentences**

You could try out one or two different ways of beginning your essay — possibly from the list that follows — but do not agonize over the first sentences because you are likely to discover the best way to begin only after you have written a rough draft. Again, you might want to review your invention writing to see if you have already written something that would work to launch your essay.

To engage your readers' interest from the start, consider the following opening strategies:

- an interesting and relevant quotation (like Bernard)
- an assertion of a topic's larger cultural relevance (like Bernard)

- an assertion of an issue's increasing significance (like Mae and Alexander)
- an anecdote or personal reminiscence
- a surprising statement
- statistics
- a research study
- a scenario
- an historical analogy

### A Sentence Strategy: Introducing a Quotation with a Colon

As you draft an essay finding common ground, you will need to quote frequently from the two opposing positions. Quoting does more than prove the fairness and accuracy of your report. If you allow readers to see some of the writers' actual language, you help them understand the debaters as writers and thinkers. There are several strategies available to you for inserting writers' language directly into the sentences of your own essay.

You may use speaker tags alone — “Johnson *says*” or “Lopez *claims*” — or you may rely on the word *that*, as in “Kynard counters *that* ‘Graff greatly exaggerates the amount of damage this hurricane will cause.’” And there is another way, not necessarily better but a very useful alternative: setting up or preparing for a quotation from the beginning of a sentence that leads the reader towards a colon, with the quotation immediately following the colon. Here is an example:

He [Paige] reminds readers of NCLB's theme: “If you challenge students, they will rise to the occasion.” (Alexander, par. 10)

Alexander might have written a different sentence: “NCLB's theme is something he wants to remind you of when he says, ‘if you challenge students, they will rise to the occasion.’” The advantage to the sentence she did write is that it is more precise, and it puts the mention of a theme right next to the quotation that illustrates or defines it.

Here are three more examples:

He [Weaver] presents this argument gingerly through rhetorical questions: “Is this all the law of unintended consequences? . . .” (Alexander, par. 11)

Walt Whitman, the great nineteenth-century poet, sang its praises: “It's our game — the American game.” (Bernard, par. 1)

Johnson asserts: “A clear-cut repudiation of torture or abuse is . . . essential to the safety of the troops” (26), who need to be able to “claim the full protection of the Geneva Conventions . . . when they are captured, in this or any war” (27). (Mae, par. 3)

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Your essay seeking common ground is based on sources: the position essays you have studied and your background research on the issue. In nearly every sentence of your essay, you will be quoting, summarizing, or paraphrasing these sources. When you quote from them, you have many options for integrating a quotation smoothly into your explanation.

**Working with Sources:**  
Weaving Quoted Materials into Your Own Sentences

One familiar, common strategy is to create a noun clause beginning with *that*, as in this example:

Johnson argues against this common claim, writing that “whenever we torture or mistreat prisoners, we are capitulating morally to the enemy — in fact, adopting the terrorist ethic that the end justifies the means” (26). (Mae, par. 4)

But he insists that “Commissioners, club officials, the Players Association, and players” should share “responsibility for the steroids era” and “should join in” the “effort to bring the era of steroids and human growth hormone to an end” (311). (Bernard, par. 11)

Another common strategy is to introduce the quotation with a verb like *say*, or alternatives to it like *assert*, *claim*, *ask*, *argue*, *explain*:

“Steroids are coercive,” Fost explains, because “if your opponents use them, you have to” as well or you risk losing. (Bernard, par. 10)

“More than anything,” remarked Pete Hamill, the twentieth-century journalist and novelist, “it’s a game of innocence” (Andrijeski). (Bernard, par. 1)

As he says, “the prediction became reality last summer when nearly 25 percent of schools in Connecticut were identified as having failed to make AYP.” (Alexander, par. 8)

Therefore, Walker concludes, each athlete has to decide for him- or herself what’s “appropriate or necessary.” (Bernard, par. 10)

Beyond relying on *that* or a verb alone, you can weave the quotations right into your own sentence structures. This option is especially useful when the material you want to quote is a phrase rather than a clause or a complete sentence.

He sees “no logical or ethical distinction between — just for example — killer workouts and PEDs.” Therefore, Walker concludes, each athlete has to decide for him- or herself what’s “appropriate or necessary.” (Bernard, par. 10)

Johnson puts down the scenario outright as an unrealistic “Hollywood drama” (26). (Mae, par. 7)

This approach allows you to easily accommodate two or more quotations in one of your own sentences:

Paige makes a strong economic argument for the need to improve high school education so that students are prepared for the “fastest-growing occupations in the United States” and can compete in the new “global economy.” (Alexander, par. 7)

Paige, on the other hand, characterizes Weaver’s recommendations as “complaints of the unwilling,” arguing that instead of changing the NCLB Act, we should give it time and “work to make the law successful.” (Alexander, par. 13)

For more help on using sources in your writing, turn to Chapter 24.

## Critical Reading Guide



Basic Features

Your instructor may arrange a peer review session in class or online where you can exchange drafts with your classmates and give each other a thoughtful critical reading — pointing out what works well and suggesting ways to improve the draft. Remember, a good critical reading does three things: it lets the writer know how well the reader understands the analysis, praises what works best, and indicates where the draft could be improved.

1. Evaluate how effectively the issue and opposing positions are introduced.

**Summarize:** Briefly tell the writer what you understand the issue to be about and what the different positions are on the issue.

**Praise:** Indicate where the writer does a good job explaining the issue, introducing the authors, or engaging readers' interest.

**Critique:** Describe any confusion or uncertainty you have about the issue, why it is important, or what positions are usually taken on it.

2. Consider whether the analysis is sufficiently probing.

**Summarize:** Tell the writer what you think are the main points of disagreement and agreement (actual or potential).

**Praise:** Identify one or two passages where the analysis seems especially interesting and original — for example, where the arguments seem opposed but are shown to be based on the same reasoning, evidence, or motivational factor, such as a shared value.

**Critique:** Give the writer suggestions on how the analysis could be improved — for example, indicate where one of the writer's points needs additional explanation or where adding an example would make the point easier to grasp. Let the writer know if you detect any other motivating factors that might be used to establish common ground.

3. Consider whether the writer's presentation is fair and impartial.

**Praise:** Note any passages where the writer comes across as being especially fair and impartial.

**Critique:** Tell the writer if the authors and their positions are presented unfairly or if one side seems to be favored over the other.

4. Assess the essay's readability.

**Praise:** Pick one or two places where the essay is especially clear and easy to follow — for example, where comparative transitions signal similarities and differences.

**Critique:** Let the writer know where the readability could be improved — for example, where a topic sentence could be clearer or where a transition is needed. Can you suggest a better beginning or more effective ending?

5. If the writer has expressed concern about anything in the draft that you have not discussed, respond to that concern.

**Making Comments Electronically** Most word processing software offers features that allow you to insert comments directly into the text of someone else's document. Many readers prefer to make their comments this way because it tends to be faster than writing on hard copy and space is virtually unlimited; it also eliminates the process of deciphering handwritten comments. Where such features are not available, simply typing comments directly into a document in a contrasting color can provide the same advantages.

## Revising

Very likely you have already thought of ways to improve your draft, and you may even have begun to revise it. The Troubleshooting Chart on p. 230 will help. Before using the chart, however, it is a good idea to do the following:

- Review critical reading comments from your classmates, instructor, or writing center tutor.
- Make an outline of your draft so that you can look at it analytically.

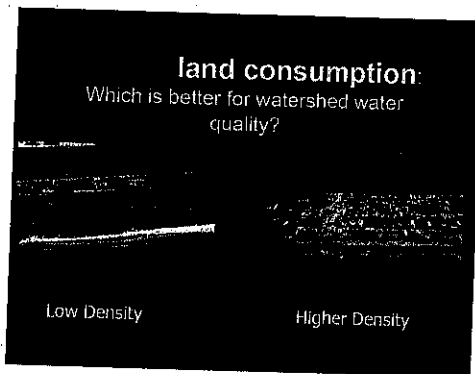
You may have made an outline before writing your draft, but after drafting you need to see what you actually wrote, not what you intended to write. You can outline the draft quickly by highlighting the basic features — presenting the issue, analyzing the opposing positions, effectively presenting an impartial account of the opposing arguments, and making the essay readable.

### Thinking About Document Design: Helping Readers Visualize a Solution

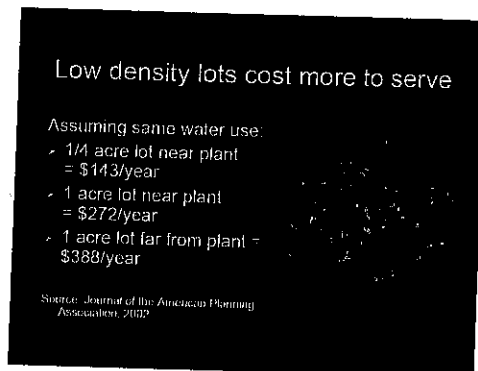
In the presentation cosponsored by an engineering consulting firm and the EPA at the New Partners for Smart Growth Conference (see the chapter-opening scenario on p. 185), document design played an important role in helping attendees visualize the proposed plan for development. The greatest challenge for the presenters was to design materials that would make clear the complexities of the competing needs of the stakeholders, and the proposed resolution of them, in a relatively short session.

Their first impulse was to present the precise statistical data that the consulting firm had gathered to persuade stakeholders that their solution was best for all parties. When they drafted PowerPoint slides that contained such data, however, they realized that the information was too detailed and too text-based to be effective in the conference setting: depending on where they were sitting, attendees would not necessarily be able to read all the detail, and they wouldn't have enough time to absorb it. Instead, the presenters designed a series of slides that conveyed the challenges and alternative solutions concisely and in a visually compelling way.

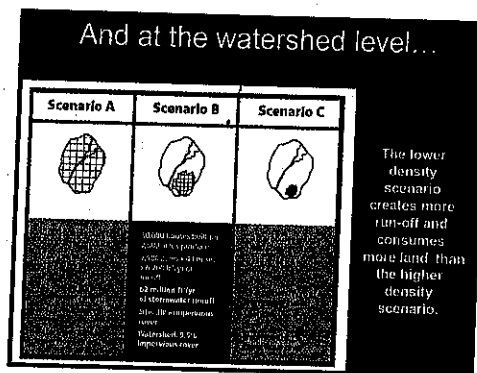
For example, to introduce one of their key concepts — the large difference between high- and low-density development in terms both of environmental impact and dollar costs — they began by engaging their audience with a simple question, set in an eye-catching yellow font, which they illustrated simply using contrasting photographs:



They proceeded to answer their own question with statistics showing that low-density lots cost more to supply with water and basic utilities:



Next, they used a simple illustration showing the differences in environmental impact from high-, medium-, and low-density developments:



The simplicity and visual appeal of the PowerPoint slides they created were instrumental in conveying their ideas clearly and persuasively.



# Troubleshooting Your Draft

●●●● Basic Features

	Problem	Suggestions for Revising the Draft
	My readers are not clear about the issue or the opposing positions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> State the issue explicitly as a <i>should</i> question.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Use a comparative transition (i.e., <i>whereas X . . . , Y . . . ;</i> or <i>X . . . but Y . . .</i>) to sharpen the contrast between the opposing positions.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Explain the positions in more depth, perhaps providing examples or anecdotes to make them more concrete.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Consider adding visuals, graphs, tables, or charts, if these would help clarify the issue and opposing positions.</li></ul>
	My readers are not interested or do not appreciate the issue's importance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Add additional information about the issue and authors.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Contextualize the issue in history, politics, socioeconomics, or cultural phenomena or trends.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Quote notable authorities on the issue.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Cite polls or research studies.</li></ul>
	My readers do not understand what my main points are.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Determine whether you are trying to cover too many points without going into detail about any of them.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Consider which points can be cut or categorized under other points.</li></ul>
	My analysis seems more like a summary than a probing analysis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Reexamine each argument to get at the underlying motivating factors that could explain the agreement or disagreement.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Try reorganizing your analysis by grouping related points — on the basis of shared values, common concerns, political agenda, etc.</li></ul>
	I reveal my own position.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Consider where changing your word choice — perhaps adding <i>may</i> or <i>could</i> — would help you come across as impartial.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Cut passages where you evaluate the opposing positions, or quote others to critique weak arguments.</li></ul>
	My presentation is not unbiased or balanced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> If you favor one side over the other, try to balance your presentation by discussing how the other essay deals with the point.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Make sure that you are representing each essay accurately and fairly.</li></ul>
	My readers are confused by my essay, or find it difficult to read.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Consider adding a forecasting statement and topic sentences to introduce key terms, and repeating terms to help readers track your main points.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Add or clarify comparative transitions when you are comparing or contrasting the opposing arguments.</li></ul>

## Editing and Proofreading

Our research indicates that particular errors occur often in common ground essays: incorrect comma usage in sentences with interrupting phrases, and vague pronoun reference. The following guidelines will help you check your essay for these common errors.

### Using Commas around Interrupting Phrases

What is an interrupting phrase? When writers are analyzing opposing positions, they need to supply a great deal of information, precisely and accurately. They add much of this information in phrases that interrupt the flow of a sentence, as in the following example:

The concern was so great that George Mitchell, the former Senate Majority Leader and peace negotiator, was enlisted to investigate.

Such *interrupting phrases*, as they are called, are typically set off with commas.

**The Problem.** Forgetting to set off an interrupting phrase with commas can make sentences difficult to read or unclear.

**How to Correct It.** Add a comma on either side of an interrupting phrase.

- ▶ Live Nation, without hesitating, paid \$350 million to buy HOB Entertainment, which owns the popular House of Blues clubs.
- ▶ Virtual football, to hold onto its fans and gain more, soon has to move beyond solitary players to teams of players on the Internet.

### Correcting Vague Pronoun Reference

**The Problem.** *Pronouns* replace and refer to nouns, making writing more efficient and cohesive. If the reference is vague, however, rather than clear and precise, this advantage is lost. A common problem is vague use of *this*, *that*, *it*, or *which*.

**How to Correct It.** Scan your writing for pronouns, taking special note of places where you use *this*, *that*, *it*, or *which*. Check to be sure that it is crystal clear what *this*, *that*, *it*, *which*, or another pronoun refers to. If it is not, revise your sentence.

- ▶ Television evangelists seem to be perpetually raising money, *this habit* which makes some viewers question their motives.

#### A Note on Grammar and Spelling Checkers

These tools can be helpful, but do not rely on them exclusively to catch errors in your text: Spelling checkers cannot catch misspellings that are themselves words, such as *to* for *too*. Grammar checkers miss some problems, sometimes give faulty advice for fixing problems, and can flag correct items as wrong. Use these tools as a second line of defense after your own (and, ideally, another reader's) proofreading/editing efforts.

For practice, go to [bedfordstmartins.com/theguide/exercisecentral](http://bedfordstmartins.com/theguide/exercisecentral) and click on Commas around Interrupting Phrases.

- By the late 1960s, plate tectonics emerged as a new area of study.

Tectonics was based on the notion of the earth's crust as a collection

of plates or land masses above and below sea level, constantly in motion.

*startling new geological theory*

This took a while for most people to accept, because of its unexpected novelty.

- Inside the Summit Tunnel the Chinese laborers were using as much as

500 kegs a day of costly black powder to blast their way through the

*The unexpected expense*

solid rock. It was straining the Central Pacific's budget.

For practice, go to [bedfordstmartins.com/theguide/exercisecentral](http://bedfordstmartins.com/theguide/exercisecentral) and click on Vague Pronoun Reference.

## A Writer at Work

### Melissa Mae's Analysis

#### Annotating and Charting Annotations

In this section, you can learn how one writer, Melissa Mae, prepared to write "Laying Claim to a Higher Morality" (see pp. 195–97 in the Readings section of this chapter). In this essay, Mae analyzes two essays taking opposing positions on the issue of whether the United States should use torture in the interrogation of suspected terrorists. Following the Guide to Writing, Mae first annotated the key features of the essays' arguments and their motivating factors. Then she entered the results of her analysis on a chart that helped her see at a glance where the points of agreement and disagreement were located in both essays.

To learn from this Writer at Work demonstration, first read the two essays Mae analyzed. Then, look at Mae's Annotation Chart and a passage she annotated.

#### The Essays Melissa Mae Analyzed

Below are the two essays Mae used for her finding common ground essay. (For three additional essays on the issue of torture, along with a short overview of the issue, see pp. 243–63.)