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ENGLISH 101-004

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FINDING A SUBJECT

The Five Commandments for Finding a (Good) Subject

1. Never say, "I don't have anything to write about." You *do* have something to write about. Your life is not boring. You only *think* it is. You have lived at least eighteen years by now. Something interesting has happened to you.
2. Write about something you are interested in and informed about.
3. If you are interested in something, but are not informed about it, you must be willing to research it. (Yes, that means the library!)
4. You must write about something an audience would be interested in reading about. (If you can find someone interested in reading about the sex life of a boa constrictor, fine!)
5. Learn how to narrow a subject.

Exercise 1: Interest Inventory*

What are you interested in? Take ten or fifteen minutes to list a few items for each of these (very) general categories. Don't just sit and think. Brainstorm. Write whatever pops into your head.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| a. friends | i. sports |
| b. enemies | j. university life |
| c. people you admire | k. books |
| d. special places | m. music |
| e. fond memories | n. film |
| f. not-so-fond memories | o. what matters most |
| g. worries | |
| h. strange-but-true stories | |

*This list is borrowed from Stephen Judy's article "The Experiential Approach" in *Eight Approaches*.

Learning to Narrow a General Subject

Sports is a general subject. Volumes of books have been written about sports. There is no possible way you could say anything meaningful about such a general subject in a 500-700 word essay. What follows is a subject spectrum in which a general subject is narrowed, then narrowed again and again until it is narrow enough for a freshman composition essay.

General			Specific		
sports	football	LSU football	LSU quarterback Tommy Hodson	Hodson's football career	Hodson's 1988 football season

Isn't it amazing how narrow a general subject can become? I could have narrowed this subject even further by talking about Hodson's playing in the 1988 LSU-Tulane game. However, I thought that might be a bit too narrow. The wonderful aspect of creating a subject spectrum is that you can always move to the next less specific topic if your topic proves to be too narrow to provide enough information for your paper.

Exercise 2: Practicing Narrowing Subjects

Create a subject spectrum for each of the following subjects. Narrow them as much as you can.

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| a. The Olympics | e. Shakespeare |
| b. horror movies | f. popular music |
| c. holidays | g. college dorms |
| d. my best friend | h. money |

Exercise 3: Finding Your Own Subjects

Choose five subjects from the list you created in exercise 1. Choose ones you are especially interested in and informed about. Create a subject spectrum for these subjects.

Congratulations! You have found some limited subjects. The next step is to create a thesis so that your subject will work in the kind of paper you are writing (i.e. informative, evaluative).

Liggett/English 1001

SHOW NOT TELL TIME

Remember show and tell time in elementary school? It wasn't enough to stand up and tell about the sea shells you collected on the beach over spring vacation; you had to wrap each one in kleenex, pack them in a shoe box, carry them carefully to school, pass them around, and let other students investigate them in order to share your experience and to keep your audience's attention. The same principle applies in writing. If you want to get your point across, you must not only tell your readers what you are thinking, but you must show them as well. Consider the following example:

In "Graduation in Stamps," Maya Angelou wants her readers to understand the shame and frustration that she felt for her race during the ceremony. She doesn't tell her readers this; she shows them:

The man's dead words fell like bricks around the auditorium and too many settled in my belly. Constrained by hard-learned manners I couldn't look behind me, but to my left and right the proud graduating class of 1940 had dropped their heads. Every girl in my row had found something new to do with her handkerchief. Some folded the tiny squares into love knots, some into triangles, but most were wadding them, then pressing them flat on their yellow laps.

....
We were maids and farmers, handymen and washervomen, and anything higher that we aspired to was farciacal and presumptuous.

Your personal experience essay will be much better if you too SHOW more than you TELL. For example, one student who was re-creating a favorite memory told about having her first cigarette: "I slowly sucked the stick and felt a warm sensation fill my chest. A chill ran down my spine as I smiled and exhaled." An alert reader will challenge the writer on two points: Did the smoker experience no discomfort? Is there not a better way to show how she felt than to rely on the cliché, "a chill ran down my spine"?

The writer took the challenge and rewrote her description this way: "I slowly lifted my cigarette until it touched my lips. I sucked the stick and a cloud of warm smoke filled my chest. Suddenly I felt nauseated and my chest felt like a bomb ready to explode. I spit the smoke out and coughed. My eyes began to water, but I managed a grin."

Now you try it. Develop 3 of these sentences into well written paragraphs in which you show more than tell the point you are making. The original sentence should not appear in your paragraph.

The concert was fantastic.
She has a nice personality.
LSU students have school spirit.

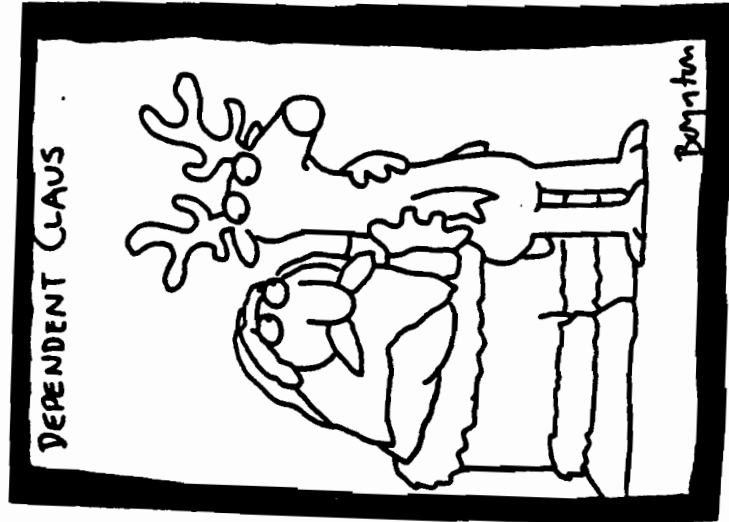
My family and I are close.
Traveling is a lot of fun.
I was so embarrassed.

From:

Writing with a Thesis

by David Skwire.

(New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston), 1982. (3rd. ed.)



CHAPTER

I

The Persuasive Principle

This book offers you one central piece of advice: Whenever possible, think of your writing as a *form of persuasion*.

Persuasion is traditionally considered a separate branch of writing. When you write what's usually called a persuasion paper, you pick a controversial issue, tell your readers what side you're on, and try to persuade them that you're correct: the defense budget needs to be increased, handguns should be outlawed, Shakespeare's plays were written by Queen Elizabeth I, required freshman English courses are an insult to human dignity. Persuasion is supposed to be based on different principles from those of other kinds of writing—description, narration, exposition, and so forth.
It isn't.

A description of a relative, an account of what you went through to get your first job, a comparison of two makes of television sets—if you can approach such assignments as an effort to persuade your reader of the validity of a particular opinion or major point, you're in business as a writer. Your paper's opinion or major point is called its *thesis*. Your thesis may be that your relative is the most boring person you have ever met, that getting your first job was easier than you thought it would be, that a Zenith television set is likely to last longer than an RCA. If you have a thesis and if you select and organize your material so that it supports the thesis, a number of basic writing problems begin to solve themselves. You have built-in purpose. You have built-in organization. You have the potential of built-in interest. Aside from a few obvious exceptions like newspaper reports, encyclopedia articles, instruction manuals, recipes, and certain types of stories, poems, and plays, *all writing can benefit from a commitment to the persuasive principle: develop a thesis, and then back it up.*

There is no better way to demonstrate the effectiveness of the persuasive principle than to take a close look at what goes on, or ought to go on, as a paper is being planned!

General Subject

"Write something worth reading about such and such." In essence, all writing assignments—for students, business executives, Nobel Prize winners, and anyone else—begin this way, though ordinarily the directions aren't that frank.

Let's start from scratch and assume that your instructor has left the choice of subject mostly up to you. You may be entirely on your own, or you may have a list of general subjects from which you must make your selection. Imagine that you have to write something worth reading about one of the following: education, sports, prejudice, politics, television.

You make your choice, if you're like the majority of people, by deciding what you're most interested in and informed about or what will go over best with your audience. Let's say you pick education. You now have a subject, and your troubles have now begun.

You have to write 500 words or so on a subject to which tens of thousands of books have been devoted. Where do you begin? Where do you stop? Will it ever be possible to stop? What's important? What's not important? Until you limit your subject, you have no way of answering any of these questions. You are at the mercy of every miscellaneous thought and scrap of information that drifts into your mind.

Limited Subject

Narrow down your subject. Then narrow it down some more. Narrow it down until you have a subject that can be treated effectively in the assigned length. In many respects, the narrower your subject, the better off you are, as long as you still have something to say about it. With a properly limited subject, you explore only a small part of your general subject, but you explore it thoroughly.

A paper of 500 words on education is doomed to be superficial at best. It might be possible, however, to write 500 words worth reading on one of your teachers, essay versus objective examinations, reasons for attending college (narrowed down to just one reason if you have enough to say), registration procedures, fraternities, physical education requirements, and so on.

With a sensibly limited subject, you start to have a chance of producing a good paper. You are no longer doomed to superficiality. If you write a description of one of your teachers, for example, you possess immensely more knowledge of your subject than do fellow students who have not taken a course from that teacher. Certainly, you are no longer at the mercy of every thought about education that you have ever had.

General Subject **Limited Subject**
 Education Professor X
 Sports The Olympics
 Prejudice Interracial marriages
 Politics Bad influences of the media
 Television Commercials

Your troubles are not over, though. You've limited your subject, and you've done it well, but what now? Look at the most limited of the subjects in the

preceding table. You're writing a description of a teacher—Professor X. Do you tell your reader about the teacher's height, weight, age, marital status, clothing, ethnic background, religious background, educational background? Publications? Grading policy? Attendance policy? Lecture techniques? Sense of humor? Handling of difficult classroom situations? Attitude toward audiovisual aids? Knowledge of field? How, in short, do you determine what belongs in your paper and what doesn't?

The truth is that you're still at the mercy of every thought that occurs to you. This time it's every thought about Professor X, not every thought about education in general. But until you find a thesis, you still have trouble.

Thesis

Your thesis is the basic stand you take, the opinion you express, the point you make about your limited subject. It's your controlling idea, tying together and giving direction to all other separate elements in your paper. Your primary purpose is to persuade the reader that your thesis is a valid one.

You may, and probably should, have secondary purposes; you may want to amuse or alarm or issue a call to action, for instance—but unless the primary purpose is achieved, no secondary purpose stands a chance. If you want to amuse your readers by making fun of inconsistent dress codes at your old high school, there's no way to do it successfully without first convincing them of the validity of your thesis that the dress codes were inconsistent and thus do deserve to be laughed at.

A thesis, of course, is only a vibration in the brain until it is turned into words. The first step in creating a workable thesis is to write a one-sentence version of the thesis, which is called a thesis statement.

Professor X is an incompetent teacher.
 Professor X is a classic absentminded professor.
 Professor X's sarcasm antagonizes many students.
 Professor X's colorful personality has become a campus legend.
 Professor X is better at lecturing than at leading discussions.
 Professor X's youthful good looks have created awkward problems in class

If you need more than one relatively uncomplicated sentence, chances are either that the thesis isn't as unified as it ought to be or that it's too ambitious for a short paper.

Limited Subject **Thesis Statement**
 Professor X Professor X is an incompetent teacher.
 The Olympics The Olympic games are hypocritical nonsense
 Interracial marriages Hostility to interracial marriages is the prejudice least likely to die.
 Bad influences of the media Newspapers and television have changed American priorities for the worse.
 Commercials Television commercials are great entertainment

Writing with a thesis obviously gives a paper a sense of purpose and eliminates the problem of aimless drift. Your purpose is to back up the thesis. As a

THESIS EXERCISES

What a Thesis Is Not

Not a Title

A title can often give the reader some notion of what the thesis is going to be, but it is not the thesis itself. The thesis itself, as presented in the thesis statement, does not suggest the main idea-it is the main idea. Remember, too, that a thesis statement will always be a complex sentence; there is no other way to make a statement.

TITLE: NOT A THESIS	THESIS STATEMENT
Home and Schools	Parents ought to participate more in the education of their children.
James Cagney: Hollywood Great	James Cagney was one of the greatest actors ever to appear in movies.
Inflation and Old Age	Continuing inflation makes it almost impossible to plan intelligently for one's retirement.
A Shattering Experience	My first visit to the zoo was a shattering experience.
The Fad of Divorce	Too many people get divorced for trivial reasons.

Not an Announcement of the Subject

A thesis takes a stand. It expresses an attitude toward the subject. It is not the subject itself.

ANNOUNCEMENT: NOT A THESIS	THESIS STATEMENT
My subject is the incompetence of Professor X.	Professor X is an incompetent teacher.
I want to share some thoughts with you about our space program.	Our space program is a waste of money.
The many unforeseen problems I encountered when I went camping are the topic of this theme.	I encountered many unforeseen problems when I went camping.
This paper will attempt to tell you something about the emotions I felt on viewing the Grand Canyon.	The Grand Canyon was even more magnificent than I had imagined.
The thesis of this paper is the difficulty of solving our environmental problems.	Solving our environmental problems is more difficult than many environmentalists believe.

Not a Statement of Absolute Fact

A thesis makes a judgment of interpretation. There's no way to spend a whole paper supporting a statement that needs to support.

FACT: NOT A THESIS

- Jane Austin is the author of *Pride and Prejudice*.
- The capitol of California is Sacramento.
- Suicide is the deliberate taking of one's own life.
- President Lincoln's first name was Abraham.
- The planet closest to the sun is Mercury.

What a Good Thesis Is

It's possible to have a one-sentence statement of an idea and still not have a thesis that can be supported effectively. What characterizes a good thesis?

A good thesis is restricted.

In certain respects, devising a thesis statement as you plan your paper can sometimes be a way in itself of limiting, or restricting, your subject even further. A paper supporting the thesis that Professor X is incompetent, besides taking a stand on its subject, has far less territory to cover than a paper on Professor X in general. Thesis statements themselves, however, may not always have been sufficiently narrowed down. A good thesis deals with restricted, bite-size issues rather than issues that would require a lifetime to discuss intelligently. The more restricted the thesis, the better the chances are for supporting it fully.

POOR	BETTER
The world is in a terrible mess.	Trade barriers contribute to international tensions.
People are too selfish.	Human selfishness is seen at its worst during rush hour.
The American steel industry has problems.	The worst problem of the American steel industry is lack of funds to renovate outdated plants and equipment.
Crime must be stopped.	Our courts should hand out tougher sentences.

A good thesis is unified.

The thesis expresses one major idea about its subject. The tight structural strength of your paper depends on its working to support that one idea. A good thesis may sometimes include a secondary idea if it is strictly subordinated to the major one, but without that subordination the writer will have too many important ideas to handle, and the structure of the paper will suffer.

POOR	BETTER
Detective stories are not a high form of literature, but people have always been fascinated by them, and many fine writers have experimented with them.	Detective stories appeal to the basic human desire for thrills.
The new health program is excellent, but it has several drawbacks, and it should be run only on experimental basis for two or three years.	The new health program should be run only on experimental basis for two or three years. OR Despite its general excellence, the new health program should be run only on an experimental basis for two or three years.
The Columbus Cavaliers have trouble at the defensive end and linebacker positions, and front-office tensions don't help, but the team should be able to make the play-offs.	The Columbus Cavaliers should be able to make the play-offs. OR Even granting a few troubles, the Columbus Cavaliers should be able to make the play-offs.

A good thesis is specific.

A satisfactorily restricted and unified thesis may be useless if the idea it commits you to is too vague. "The new World Trade Center is impressive," for example, could mean anything from impressively beautiful to impressively ugly. With a thesis statement like "Hemingway's war stories are very good," you would probably have to spend so many words defining what on earth "good" means that there would be no room for anything else. Even when there's no likelihood of conclusion, vague ideas normally come through as so familiar or dull or universally accepted that the reader sees no point in paying attention to them.

POOR	BETTER
The World Trade Center is impressive.	The World Trade Center is a monument to human folly.
Hemingway's war stories are very good.	Hemingway's war stories helped create a new prose style.
Drug addiction is a big problem.	Drug addiction has caused a dramatic increase in crimes of violence.
Our vacation was a tremendous experience.	Our vacation enabled us to learn the true meaning of sharing.
My parents are wonderful people.	Everything my parents do is based on their loving concern for the welfare of the family.

Exercises for Review



Your Name:

Your e-mail address:

A. Write *T* next to each thesis statement below. Write *NT* if there is no thesis statement.

- T NT 1. I want to tell you about the many defects in the administration's proposals for restructuring the Social Security program.
- T NT 2. Al Capone, the Chicago gang leader, was nicknamed "Scarface."
- T NT 3. Justice delayed is justice denied.
- T NT 4. My thesis asks whether affirmative action programs are just a new form of racism.
- T NT 5. It's not only poor people who get government handouts.
- T NT 6. How to Grow Prize-Winning Roses.
- T NT 7. This paper will examine recent proposals to reinstate the death penalty.
- T NT 8. My husband is a terrible cook.
- T NT 9. My husband cooks all the meals for our family.
- T NT 10. Christmas shopping shows that the law of the jungle is still with us.

B. Write *G* next to each good thesis statement. Write *NG* next to each statement that is not sufficiently restricted, unified, or specific, and be prepared to suggest revisions.

- G NG 1. The history of the United States is dominated by lust for money.
- G NG 2. Common sense is sometimes the enemy of genius.
- G NG 3. British and American poets through the centuries have vastly overrated the glories of romantic love.
- G NG 4. Thirst is harder to endure than hunger.
- G NG 5. Exercise is a worthwhile activity.
- G NG 6. Jogging can add years to one's life.
- G NG 7. Teaching tricks to a dog is easier than most people think.
- G NG 8. The way people shake hands can reveal something about their characters.
- G NG 9. Natural beauty must be preserved, but government agencies often make foolish decisions on this matter, and jobs must also be preserved.
- G NG 10. In Moby Dick, Melville does a very good job.

[BACK TO MY HOME PAGE.](#)

Lijjett/English 1001

KEY CLUB PRESIDENT

"We'll take nominations for president now."
"Brent Kelly!"
"Ellis Moore!"
"David Carter!"
"Okay, there's the candidates, now only vote for one."

I can't believe I might be president. Only two years ago I came to Sandusky High, as scared as could be. I really wanted to be involved in a club, so I went to a Key Club meeting. All the members were popular and they made real good grades. I made pretty good grades but for some reason I felt inferior to them. Before the meeting even started I got up and left without being seen. I realized later that I was stupid for not staying. Well, the next year rolled around and people were joining clubs. I thought I might try again having somewhat overcome my lack of self-confidence.

Such to my surprise in no time I was in the club and becoming very active. I was elected secretary that year. Now a year later here I am again awaiting the results of the voting.

"The votes are totaled. Our new president is Ellis Moore."

Well, I really couldn't believe it. I made it! I was really lucky to be president that year because we had a real good membership. The seniors were especially active and willing to work. Our club was a very active one, with each member taking part in all our projects. We gained the respect of the school and community. The club was asked to take part in almost all school events such as Homecoming and dances. We were invited to local Kiawanis and Rotary Club meetings. Some of our officers were guest at a banquet for former governor Edwin Edwards.

One of our major service projects was that we took two boys from Boy's Village shopping at Christmas. An area clothing store stayed open after hours to allow them to search for all they needed throughout the store. Our second major project was a blood drive. The local office of the Louisiana Blood Center spent eight hours accepting donations of a pint of blood from students, teachers, and some area citizens who wished to take part.

I am very proud to have been associated with such a fine club. I left Sandusky High with more responsibility and self-confidence than I came to it with. I guess you can get out of something what you put in it if not more.

My Ten-Year High School Reunion
by Kathy Sutton

As the mailman made his rounds through the Arkansas bedroom community, I heard his brakes squeak at each house down the street. Little did I know that today's mail would eventually change my self-image. When I recognized the clip of my mailbox door, I told my two-year-old to watch her baby sister, then I went out to get the mail. Among the bills was a letter from Bonneville High School in Ogden, Utah. I would have usually hurried to read a message from home but instead, I hesitated. An impersonal invitation requested my presence at the ten-year class reunion.

Amazed that it had indeed been that long, I thought back to when I was a junior in high school and desperately wanted to be a member of the drill team, the Lakettes. Not being one of the popular girls who were usually chosen for this glamorous status, I had to practice faithfully the routines for try-outs. One night while exercising in the living room, I suddenly became aware of cackles and hoots coming from the front yard. Sheer draperies over the picture window had not hidden my erratic performance from the neighborhood athletic heroes and the student body president, Scott Weilsen. Immediately, I crashed to the carpet, wishing it would swallow me up, and slowly crawled out of the room.

"Honey, Honey!" wailed my impatient toddlers, bringing me back to reality. I hugged them both and hoped they would never become objects of rejection in their high school years.

My daughters reminded me of my best friend in high school, Roma Lee. Together we survived those turbulent years of pimples, blunders, and unpopularity. Now I missed her deeply and knew we'd have a great time at the reunion together. I wondered if my classmates had changed and felt anxious to see them again.

Ironically, my husband Leroy and I had already made plans for a vacation to Utah that summer.

My excitement turned to a feeling of desertion when I returned to Utah and learned that Roma was out of town for the summer. Regardless, my mother and husband considered this a chance for me to show my classmates that I was a successful late bloomer.

All too soon, the day of the reunion arrived. My husband and I drove to the Elks Lodge. The sultry afternoon wilted my spirits along with my hair and makeup. Pulling down the visor mirror, I saw a stern, heat-flushed face. Leroy didn't perceive the disapproval evident in my eyes. I hoped that no one would know that my dress wasn't new or that my hair was too short. As people scurried toward the door, I searched eagerly for Vicki, Patty, or Donna.

The car became an oven, forcing us into the crowd. My stomach wrenched tightly, and I wanted to run away. The timid high school girl had re-emerged inside of me. I held Leroy's hand tightly as we walked to the door.

Inside the Elks Lodge, the pungent smell of stale beer and thick cigarette smoke hung together like smog. Chattering around us were unchanged voices that brought back memories of each face. Their Utah

drawl clung to each word.

The ncisy procession of people bottlenecked on the half lit staircase leading to the ballroom. A boisterous voice, from a few steps ahead, belonged to an old crush, Dirk Davis. He was now surprisingly quite bald. Dirk's tone quickly turned to ridicule when he noticed Louis Lucero in the ballroom proudly wearing an Air Force uniform. I knew that uniform well. Leroy wore his to work, back in Arkansas, just as proudly.

Believed that Leroy hadn't heard Dirk's remarks, I continued to search the dusty ballroom for friends. Faces seemed to fade into the dusty sunbeams sneaking through the dark curtains. No one ventured away from their high school cliques. "Where were my good friends?" I sadly thought.

Leroy left to buy drinks. He had been a well known track star who would have been the life of the party at his high school reunion in Louisiana. I had played the clarinet in the band while wanting to march with the Lakettes. Again I stood alone among the same people who I once wanted to accept me.

The program announcement boomed over the loud speaker, and I found Leroy just in time to get seats. Former homecoming queens, cheerleaders, Lakettes, and sports heroes were the ones again being honored. Nothing had changed. When the local band drowned out the chance for further conversation, Leroy and I agreed to leave.

At the door stood Scott Neilsen looking unexpectedly average. Ten years ago I had pictured him as governor by now. Despite the dim lights, I could see him clearly and firmly shock his outstretched hand.

As Leroy and I walked to the car, the mounting weight of bitterness began to lift. Once inside, I took a long look into the visor mirror. A relaxed face had replaced the stern one of before. The shy high school girl had vanished. This time I saw a woman who'd left Utah to live in five different states and raise two beautiful children, often on her own. I saw a woman able to make new friends at each new place. Finally, I could see those high school heroes for just what they were, ordinary people. It didn't matter now that they had rejected me. For the first time, I was intensely satisfied to simply be me.

"Blue Moon"

During my eighth grade year at Creekwood Middle School, just north of Houston, Texas, I enrolled in a Drama II class simply because I enjoyed the teacher and had a chance to express my talent of acting a fool without having to face the consequences of being a "disruptive student." Having moved to the Houston area only one year earlier, I was constantly on the lookout for opportunities to increase my popularity. In doing so, I had developed quite a reputation as a class clown, which sometimes proved to be quite embarrassing.

Mrs. Dumas, my drama teacher, enjoyed my enthusiasm and sense of humor. I found this to be quite refreshing since most of my other teachers seemed to despise it. I guess you could say we had some sort of understanding.

The big project for the year was a three act play called *Up The Down Staircase*. I won't go into the plot, because I really don't remember much of it. I do, however, remember the setting because that is where, shall I say, I got caught with my pants down.

The setting was an inner city, high school classroom. Along the back of the stage was a wall filled with graffiti, a fake blackboard, and several holes cut in at different levels. At various times in the play, the principal, whom I played, would stick his face through one of the holes and give the morning announcements.

One infamous afternoon, Mrs. Dumas had gone to the principal's office for one reason or another and had left us to rehearse our lines, which of course, we had no intentions of doing. Having heard the song earlier in the day, one of my classmates was singing "Blue Moon." Mark, who was a good friend and the spotlight operator, came up with the brilliant idea that I should go behind the wall on the stage and stick my bare bottom through one of the holes intended for my face. Showing someone your bare bottom was termed a "moon"--needless to say. While my backside was displayed to the rest of the class, Mark was to turn on the blue spotlight and shine it where the sun usually didn't shine--on my butt. While all this was going on, Mark would also sing a song that seemed to suit the occasion, which as you probably guessed was "Blue Moon."

The class definitely got a good laugh, and I was very proud to have caused it. Then the singing came to an abrupt halt. Wondering why my butt was no longer funny, I turned around to see what was wrong. After peeking through the hole, I wished I had not. There on stage, only twenty feet away, was good old Mrs. Dumas. She was looking directly at me with a very unhappy facial expression which gave every indication of what she thought of our interpretation of the hit song.

I sank down behind the wall and hoisted up my pants as my heart raced and visions of disciplinary measures flashed through my head. I figured I should go straight to the principal's office and bypass the embarrassment of a public tongue thrashing. On second thought, I entered stage right to accept the full consequences of my actions. Upon doing so, I saw Mrs. Dumas giggling and shaking her head in a disgusted but amused manner.

Mrs. Dumas never said much about it, though now I wish I knew what she was thinking at the time. I'm sure she knew what I was thinking, which probably added to her amusement.

That incident was probably the most embarrassing moment of my life; however, my performance got great reviews from the student body and raised my social standing considerably. Later in the year, the yearbook staff asked all the teachers their most memorable experience of the year. Mrs. Dumas's response was simply, "I have a new appreciation for the song 'Blue Moon'."

REVISION

The Friendly Con-Man

The summer of my ninth grade year, my mother's voice throbbled in my ears like an earache, "Get a job this summer. Get a job this summer." To stop her nagging, I took my first step into the cold, cruel business world. This image of the business world was a jcke to me; after all, how many backstabbers and hustlers could I meet in a summer job? As it turned out, hustlers were easy to find. No one can help being fascinated by a good hustler because he always manages to get what he wants.

I went job hunting, keeping in mind stories about how hard it is to get a job. Acting on a hint from my grandmother, I got a job at a sawmill right away, or so I thought.

The first day on the job, while waiting to speak with the owner, I noticed a black man sitting near a pile of sawdust. He looked old yet strong, like a burnt tree that refuses to die. He spoke and moved slowly. And when he did, I expected his cracked leather skin to make crunching sounds like aluminum foil. He was quiet and sullen; I had the feeling he knew something I didn't.

When the boss came toward us, the old black man gave me a sad blank look. Something was bothering him, and he wanted me to know it. Sympathizing with the old man, I even felt sorrier for him after the boss's announcement: "My small lumber business is suffering because of the depressed housing industry. Therefore, I can hire one of you full time and the other part time when large orders come in. Although both of you can work this week, Friday I will decide who works full time. The pay is five seventy-five an hour."

I couldn't believe it. Five seventy-five. I was going to be rich. I smiled, glancing at the black man, who was looking at the ground with that same sad stare. "The job is mine," I thought. Five seventy-five. Visions of dollar signs danced in my head.

The visions vanished, however, when the black man turned out to be a great worker. Although he moved more slowly than I, he was consistent, almost mechanically precise. I worked faster but would tire halfway through. Our actions reminded me of the rabbit and the turtle. I began to hate the black man for threatening my job and had all but given up hope. Although the job was obviously his, the black man continued to look sad. Despite his attempts to start conversations during breaks, I refused to respond.

When my grandmother picked me up, I was furious. I told her an old black man was going to get the job. She reassured me, "Your boss, Mr. Walsh, is good friend of mine. The job is yours."

Since I felt more relaxed, I worked much harder the next day. I didn't hate the black man any more, and I stopped trying to avoid him. During breaks I would sit by the weather-beaten old man, listening to his stories. He talked about youth, his search for work during the Depression, and people my grandmother knew who had long since died. He was a fascinating story teller.

Everyday he would talk about another ten or fifteen years of his

life. The more he talked the more I like him. His stories mesmerized me. As he spoke about his recent life he became sadder, telling how hard it was for an old man to get a job. He said how much he hated welfare checks but how he had to get them to help his grandson through school. By Thursday I really liked the old man. Where would he find another job since a part time job wasn't enough? I realized how unfair it was to have this job set up for me. Although the old man was a better worker than I, he didn't have a chance to get the job. I held all the cards.

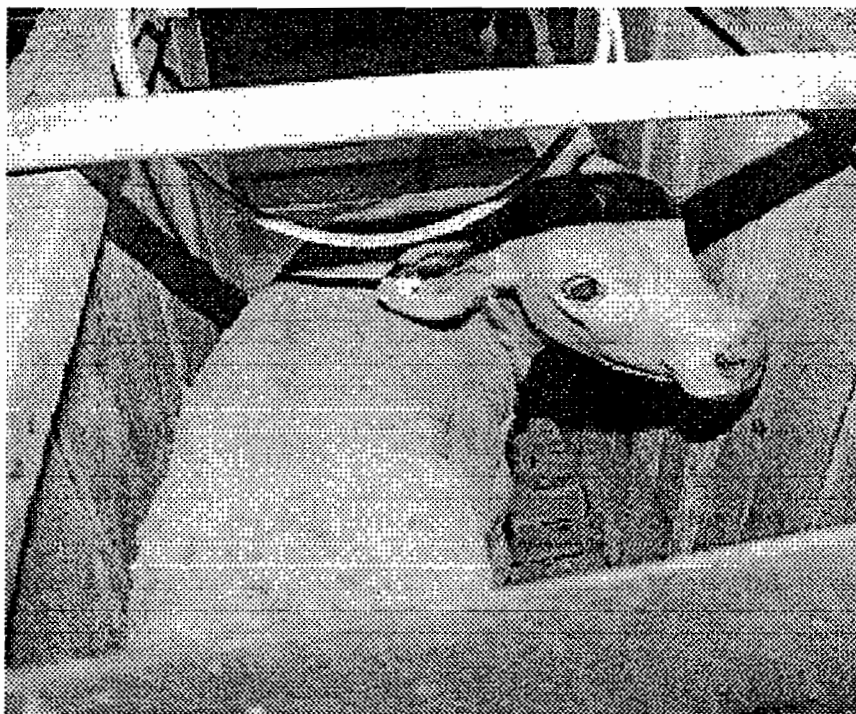
During the first break Friday morning, the old man began to talk about my grandfather who had died when I was two. The black man told me that Mr. Walsh and my grandfather were good friends. It was then I realized that the old black man knew that my grandmother had set me up with the job. I held all the cards but one, a wild card; the old black was a playing that wild card like a champion poker player. That wild card was me. Angry at first, I realized how smart this old guy was and how much I liked him. After work, when the boss was about to make his announcement, I stepped in. "I got another job."

"What do you mean?" my boss asked.

"I have another job closer to home. I'm going to work there," I replied.

My boss turned to the black man who now didn't look so old and said, "Alright, you're in." The old black man smiled from ear to ear, the wrinkles disappearing from his face. "What a sucker play," I thought. I had been hustled by the best.

Q: Why can't this veal calf walk?



A: He has only two feet.

Actually, less than two feet. Twenty two inches to be exact. His entire life is spent chained in a wooden box measuring only 22 inches wide and 56 inches long. The box is so small the calf can't walk or even turn around.

Most people think animal abuse is illegal. It isn't. In veal factories, it's business as usual. "Milk-fed" veal is obtained by making a calf anemic. The calf is not fed mother's milk. He's fed an antibiotic laced formula that causes severe diarrhea. He must lie in his own excrement—choking on the ammonia gases. He's chained in a darkened building with hundreds of other baby calves suffering the same fate. They are immobilized, sick, and anemic.

Toxic Veal

The reckless use of oxytetracycline, mold inhibiting chemicals, chloramphenicol, neomycin, penicillin, and other drugs is not just bad for calves. It is toxic to you.

But doesn't the USDA prevent tainted veal from being sold? Absolutely not. The USDA itself admits that most veal is never checked for toxic residue.

Antibiotics in veal and other factory farm products create virulent strains of bacteria that wreak havoc on human health. Salmonella poisoning is reaching epidemic proportions.

Veal factories maximize profits for agribusiness drug companies

because they are a breeding ground for disease. To keep calves alive under such torturous conditions, they are continually given drugs which can be passed on to customers.

It doesn't have to be this way. And with your help, it won't be. Please, don't buy veal!

Campaign Against Factory Farming

YES! Factory farms must be stopped from misusing drugs, abusing farm animals, and destroying America's family farms.

Enclosed is my tax-deductible contribution of:

\$20 \$50 \$100 \$500 Other _____

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

A free Customer Alert pack is available upon request.

THE HUMANE FARMING ASSOCIATION
1550 California St. Suite 12 San Francisco, CA 94109

Audience analysis questions

1. Who was the original audience?
2. What magazines would they have seen this in?
3. Whese does the ad appeal to the audience's sympathy? Its self-interest?
4. What is the proximate (immediate) goal? The ultimate goal?
5. How will the proximate goal lead to the long-term goal?
6. If you changed the audience to farmers, how would the argument change?
7. How would the short-term goal change?

FACT LIST FOR DESCRIPTIVE PARAGRAPH

1. Queen-size bed
2. Silver-brown carpet
3. Dark brown chest of drawers
4. small closet
5. small color tv
6. dark brown bed side stand that matches chest of drawers
7. brown bed spread
8. coin change always on chest of drawers
9. Indian headdress hanging on wall
10. Indian pictures hanging on wall
11. Indian statues on dresser & bed side stand
12. Bed hardly ever made
13. Mirror on closet door
14. Magazines under bed (Wildlife & dog)
15. Dog bed in the corner where cocker spaniel sleeps

My Bedroom

My bedroom is one of my favorite places. It has a silver brown carpet on the floor. I have a rather small closet which holds all my clothes and which is always a mess. My bed is also always a mess. It is a queen size bed and it has a brown bed spread, but it is usually unmade. In one corner I have a chest of drawers that is dark brown; on it I keep my change. I also have an Indian statue on the chest of drawers. My bed side stand matches the chest and also has an indian statue on it. My small color T.V. set is across the room next to the closet door. On my right wall I have some Indian pictures and on the opposite wall there is an Indian headdress. I have some Natural Wildlife magazines and some magazines about dog raising which I keep under my bed. A dog bed is in the corner where my cocker spaniel sleeps.

My Bedroom

When first walking into my bedroom, most people first think of Indians. This is probably due to all of the Indian decorations all over my room. On my right wall, above my bed, I have painting of Indians robbing trains, hunting buffalo, and so forth. On the opposite wall I have a beautiful hand-made eagle feather headdress. On my chest of drawers I have two different Indian statues; one is an Indian girl dipping water and the other is of an Indian chief smoking a peace pipe. Of course my bedroom does not stay as clean as a tepee. There are usually loose change, books, and pencils, and papers scattered over my chest of drawers. My rather small closet that barely holds all of my clothes, always stays a mess. When first entering my bedroom, a person might think of Indians, but when leaving, he will probably think I need a maid.

person, consider whether cumulative sentences or short sentence fragments would help you present the person more vividly or express your feelings more emphatically.

In the next selection, a daughter portrays her father, a man for whom she feels strong ambivalence. The essay was written by Jan Gray, a college freshman. Notice, as you read this piece, how Gray uses description to convey her feelings about her father.

FATHER

JAN GRAY

My father's hands are grotesque. He suffers from psoriasis, a chronic skin 1 disease that covers his massive, thick hands with scaly, reddish patches that periodically flake off, sending tiny pieces of dead skin sailing to the ground. In addition, his fingers are permanently stained a dull yellow from years of chain smoking. The thought of those swollen, discolored, scaly hands touching me, whether it be out of love or anger, sends chills up my spine.

By nature, he is a disorderly, unkempt person. The numerous cigarette burns, 2 food stains, and ashes on his clothes show how little he cares about his appearance. He has a dreadful habit of running his hands through his greasy hair and scratching his scalp, causing dandruff to drift downward onto his bulky shoulders. He is grossly overweight, and his pullover shirts never quite cover his protruding paunch. When he eats, he shovels the food into his mouth as if he hasn't eaten for days, bread crumbs and food scraps settling in his untrimmed beard.

Last year, he abruptly left town. Naturally, his apartment was a shambles, 3 and I offered to clean it so that my mother wouldn't have to pay the cleaning fee. I arrived early in the morning anticipating a couple hours of vacuuming and dusting and scrubbing. The minute I opened the door, however, I realized my task was monumental: Old yellowed newspapers and magazines were strewn throughout the living room; moldy and rotten food covered the kitchen counter; cigarette butts and ashes were everywhere. The pungent aroma of stale beer seemed to fill the entire apartment.

As I made my way through the debris toward the bedroom, I tried to deny 4 that the man who lived here was my father. The bedroom was even worse than the front rooms, with cigarette burns in the carpet and empty bottles, dirty dishes, and smelly laundry scattered everywhere. Looking around his bedroom, I recalled an incident that had occurred only a few months before in my bedroom.

I was calling home to tell my mother I would be eating dinner at a girlfriend's 5 house. To my surprise, my father answered the phone. I was taken aback to hear his voice because my parents had been divorced for some time and he was seldom at our house. In fact, I didn't even see him very often.

"Hello?" he answered in his deep, scratchy voice. 6

"Oh, umm, hi Dad. Is Mom home?" 7

"What can I do for you?" he asked, sounding a bit too cheerful. 8

"Well, I just wanted to ask Mom if I could stay for dinner here." 9

"I don't think that's a very good idea, dear." I could sense an abrupt change 10
in the tone of his voice. "Your room is a mess, and if you're not home in ten
minutes to straighten it up, I'll really give you something to clean." Click.

Peddalling home as fast as I could, I had a distinct image of my enraged 11
father. I could see his face redden, his body begin to tremble slightly, and his
hands gesture nervously in the air. Though he was not prone to physical violence
and always appeared calm on the outside, I knew he was really seething inside.
The incessant motion of those hands was all too vivid to me as I neared home.

My heart was racing as I turned the knob to the front door and headed for 12
my bedroom. When I opened my bedroom door, I stopped in horror. The dresser
drawers were pulled out, and clothes were scattered across the floor. Everything
on top of the dresser—a perfume tray, a couple of baskets of hair clips and
earrings, and an assortment of pictures—had been strewn about. The dresser
itself was tilted on its side, supported by the bed frame. As I stepped in and
closed the door behind me, tears welled up in my eyes. I hated my father so
much at that moment. Who the hell did he think he was to waltz into my life
every few months like this?

I was slowly piecing my room together when he knocked on the door. I 13
choked back the tears, wanting to show as little emotion as possible, and quietly
murmured, "Come in." He stood in the doorway, one hand leaning against the
door jamb, a cigarette dangling from the other, flicking ashes on the carpet,
very smug in his handling of the situation.

"I want you to know I did this for your own good. I think it's time you started 14
taking a little responsibility around this house. Now, to show you there are no
hard feelings, I'll help you set the dresser back up."

"No thank you," I said quietly, on the verge of tears again. "I'd rather do it 15
myself. Please, just leave me alone!"

He gave me one last look that seemed to say, "I offered. I'm the good guy. 16
If you refuse, that's your problem." Then he turned and walked away. I was
stunned at how he could be so violent one moment and so nonchalant the next.

As I sat in his bedroom reflecting on what he had done to my room, I felt 17
the utmost disgust for this man. There seemed to be no hope he would break
his filthy habits. I could come in and clean his room, but only he could clean up
the mess he had made of his life. But I felt pity for him, too. After all, he is my
father—am I not supposed to feel some responsibility for him and to love and
honor him?

Questions for analysis

1. Gray opens the essay by describing her father's hands as "grotesque." Why do you think she focuses on his hands? What impression does this opening have on you as a reader?

2. What does the anecdote in paragraphs 5–16 convey about her father and their relationship?

3. How does Gray use dialogue to reveal her father's character? Notice her father's choice of words and her description of his tone and posture.

4. Notice the parallel between Gray cleaning up her father's apartment and him tearing apart her room. What does this parallel suggest about their relationship?

5. Look again at the descriptions of the disorder in her father's apartment and her own room (paragraphs 3, 4, and 12). How does Gray make these scenes so vivid? What strategies of naming and detailing does she employ? (These strategies are discussed in Chapter 14: Describing.)

6. What seems to you the significance of the description of disorder in her father's apartment and her room? Why does she describe the disorder in such detail? What does it add to your understanding of her relationship with her father?

7. Imagine writing about someone with whom you had a serious conflict. Whom would you write about? How would you present this person? What overall impression of this person and of you would you like your readers to get from this essay?

Commentary Although description of place often plays a minimal role in essays about remembered people, it can be an important feature, as it is in this essay. Gray needs to describe her room and her father's apartment to show how destructive her father could be and how out of control his life was. Gray compiles long lists of things she sees, using specific names and sensory details to describe them vividly. She uses a stationary vantage point to orient her readers as she describes the rooms.

PURPOSE AND AUDIENCE

Just how a writer deploys the features common to essays about remembered people depends on the writer's subject, purpose, and readers. Essays about remembered people are as purposeful as arguments, and writers of portraits generally have several purposes in mind. Perhaps the most prominent is better understanding the subject and his or her importance in the writer's life—analyzing and reaching conclusions about a significant personal relationship. Another purpose can be self-presentation, leading readers to see the writer in a particular way. Still another purpose can be entertaining readers with a vivid portrait of an unusual or engaging subject.

Since writing about remembered people is so personal, you might think that writers write only for themselves, but such is not the case. The writer must select and organize details so that readers can easily imagine persons or scenes. Unless readers' imaginations are engaged through vivid details, the portrait will seem to them flat and lifeless. The writer must also shape and pace anecdotes to hold readers' attention. In addition, writers hope that no matter how unusual their subject, readers will recognize in the portrait a

Reaching Significance was awarded to the pair. In your own words, how do the lives of Keller and Sullivan live up to that description? Use details from the essay, your own conclusions based on your reading about Keller, and your observations about other handicapped adults in forming your answer.

2. In paragraphs 5-7, Ross describes how Helen Keller learned to speak. How does the author use detail to make this difficult process easy for the reader to understand? Choose something you have learned to do or have taught someone else to do that is difficult to explain—for example, learning to ride a bicycle, learning to walk, or learning to whistle. Consider the kinds of details you will need to include or exclude in order to say everything you need to say in the fewest possible words.

My Father, the Prince

Phyllis Theroux

Phyllis Theroux was born in San Francisco in 1939. A graduate of Manhattanville College, she has worked as a secretary, a school teacher, and a legal researcher. As a writer she has been a frequent contributor to the "Hers" column in the New York Times as well as to Reader's Digest, the Washington Post, and McCall's. In 1980, Theroux published her first book, California and Other States of Grace: A Memoir.

"My Father, the Prince" is taken from her second book, *Peripheral Visions*, a collection of autobiographical essays published in 1982. In describing her father and his special gift to her, Theroux also probes the crucial relationship that exists between all fathers and daughters.

Fathers. They say that a woman seeks—in love, marriage, or any male-female relationship of real heft—to approximate the father she had, the father she didn't have but wanted, or the father minus the attributes that caused her mother to leave him for good and sufficient reason. In the winning-out process that precedes deep commitment to a new man, the daughter subconsciously throws up the wheat of her father's virtues along with the chaff of his faults, and her decision to commit is strongly influenced by that first experience of male companionship.

I think they're right.

We all know that men consider their mothers when they choose a woman for themselves, but fathers have traditionally been considered mere linkages in the rosary of wombs that produce progeny from one decade to the next. Accessories to the fact, off-campus providers, fathers are six o'clock visitors to the nursery tended by all-powerful mothers.

One can scarcely overestimate the influence that mothers have upon their sons. But fathers have yet to be properly weighed in

as determinative factors in the lives of their daughters. To my way of thinking, this is a terrible oversight.

In a grayer, more small-minded period of my life, I used to inwardly gripe at the inaccuracy of the Cinderella story. Cinderella does not go from ashes to amethysts. In real life the brooms and the dustpans materialize after the wedding, whereupon she spends forever after staring out the window wondering where her father—the real prince in her life—has gone.

Of course, women are now rewriting that old script, and this is an age in which we are forming piano-moving companies, hiking up telephone poles, and swimming along with Jacques Cousteau. But I live with a little woman, aged seven, who recently gave me to understand that liberation is an acquired taste and no substitute for gut feeling.

"What's this?" I asked as she handed me a crayon drawing of a little girl next to what looked like a giant lollipop.

"Me," she answered. (There was a crown drawn on the little girl's head.)

"And what are you doing?" I pursued, searching the drawing for some evidence of a plot line.

"Nothing," she said matter-of-factly. "Just standing by the bus stop waiting for the prince."

I put the drawing aside, looked at my matter-of-fact daughter, and thought with chagrin, "Aren't we all!" Spoiled or despoiled by the first prince in our life, we understand, either way, what it means to be born to the purple. No, Cinderella did not accidentally fall for royalty. Her dear departed father had given her an early taste for it. My father did the same.

He was a tall, crooked-toothed, curly-haired man, who smelled of Lucky Strikes and St. Johns Bay Rum shaving lotion. He was the only father who wore penny loafers on business trips, a Mouseketeer hat to pick up my brother on his first movie date, and had the delicious gall to invite the richest girl in my class (she had her own pool but an exclusive number of invitations) to come on over to the house ("When you're free, of course") and watch our lawn sprinklers.

"Sometimes we get them going in opposite directions to each other," he said dryly, "and it's terribly amusing."

The richest girl in the class laughed nervously, I choked back

my borrowed triumph, and savored the fact that once again my father had effectively punched out the opposition on my behalf. He had a gift for it.

Yet, unlike other men blessed with a quick wit and a rare natural electricity of being, my father was oddly incapable of parlaying his gifts to his own long-range advantage.

As I grew older and more able to observe him objectively in group situations, I noticed that in a room full of peers he would usually back up against the mantel and go into a sort of social receivership that did not jibe with my understanding of him. It made me impatient. He was far and away the largest talent in the room, and it seemed a terrible waste to give over the floor to anyone else. Yet he consistently passed up opportunities to reveal himself in public, and it was many years before I realized that my wonderful father was *shy*.

I was thunderstruck. Is Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., shy? Does Cary Grant falter? Should my father have anything in the world to hesitate over?

It was one thing to be a pudgy, preadolescent girl trying to make it in a class full of gazelles, but quite another thing to be that little girl's handsome father, who at various crucial junctures had told her that all she had to do in order to succeed was to take this step, or that action, and—for heaven's sake—was the world such a difficult nut to crack after all? Of course not!

If there was any one thing that my father did for me when I was growing up it was to give me the promise that ahead of me was dry land—a bright, marshless territory, without chuckholes or traps, where one day I would walk easily and as befitting my talents. The fact that I didn't know what my talents were did not put my father off in the slightest. He knew potential when he saw it.

Thus it was, when he came upon me one afternoon sobbing out my unsuccesses into a wet pillow, that he sat down on the bed and, like a strong, omniscient archangel, assured me that my grief was only a temporary setback.

Oh, very temporary! Why he couldn't think of any other little girl who was so talented, so predestined to succeed in every department as I was. "And don't forget," he added with a smile, "that we can trace our ancestry right back to Pepin the Stupid!"¹

¹ A medieval French ruler.

That last piece of news turned out to be true, but whether he believed the rest of his words or not I don't know. He was, after all, gazing down upon a disheveled ten-year-old who was too embarrassed to shift her gum from one cheek to the other.

But I listened to him carefully, and by the time he had finished talking I really did understand that someday I would live among rational beings, and walk with kind, unvindictive people who, by virtue of their maturity and mine, would take no pleasure in cruelty and would welcome my presence among them as an asset. It was only a question of time before I came ripping out of my cocoon, a free-flying butterfly that would skim triumphantly over the meadow of my choice. I cannot say that my father was completely wrong.

Time has passed. Choices have been made. I am no longer a preteen in a net formal who secretly hoped that all the other girls at the Father-Daughter Dance were eating their hearts out. My father's crooked front tooth was replaced several years ago by a nice, straight, shiny one. He has passed through the hospital several times. There are grandchildren. I sometimes think that it is not the same between us, or perhaps it never was what I thought.

One's memory is selective, and I admit that it's to my advantage to recall only those moments when my father rose to the occasion and parted another Red Sea of Impossibility² and elbowed me across. Yet these moments really did happen and I am not the same because of them.

There are some people, my father is one of them, who carry the flint that lights other people's torches. They get them all excited about the possibilities of an idea, the "can-do" potential of one's own being.

That was my father's gift to me, and whatever psychic wounds remain to be thrashed out between us are still lying on the floor of my unconscious, waiting for deep therapy to uncover. The fact is that I am closer to my mother. But they say that a daughter carries around the infection of her father for life. They are right.

² Refers to the miraculous parting of the actual Red Sea by Moses during the Israelites' escape from Egypt (Exodus 21–29).

Questions on Subject

1. What does Theroux mean by her title, "My Father, the Prince"? In what way was her father a prince?
2. How does the Cinderella story fit into Theroux's description? What point is she making with the anecdote about her daughter's drawing?
3. What was Theroux's father's special "gift" to her? What does this gift have to do with his ability to "punch out the opposition" (paragraph 14), as well as his shyness?
4. Has Theroux's view of her father changed over the years? If so, how?

Questions on Strategy

1. Theroux's description of her father doesn't actually begin until paragraph 12. What function or functions do paragraphs 1–11 serve? (Glossary: *Beginnings*)
2. Two paragraphs in the essay—the second and the last—are linked in several interesting ways. What function do they serve in the overall context?
3. Theroux tells us very little about her father's physical appearance. How, then, does she actually describe him? Do you feel that you know what he is like?
4. Theroux's essay is drawn from her own experience and observations, yet she writes: "They say that . . ." (1); "We all know that . . ." (3); "One can scarcely overestimate . . ." (4); and, again, "But they say that . . ." (27). Why do you suppose Theroux chooses not to limit herself to the first-person *I*, particularly at the beginning and the end?

Questions on Diction and Vocabulary

1. Theroux makes effective use of figurative language in this essay. For example, she says "the daughter subconsciously throws up the wheat of her father's virtues along with the chaff of his faults" (1), and she refers to herself as a "pudgy, preadolescent girl trying to make it in a class full of gazelles" (18). Locate several other figures

- of speech and comment on their contributions to this essay. (Glossary: *Figures of Speech*)
2. Refer to your desk dictionary to determine the meanings of the following words as they are used in this selection: *left* (paragraph 1), *amethysts* (5), *chagrin* (11), *despoiled* (11), *gall* (12), *parlaying* (15), *receivership* (16), *omniscient* (20), *psychic* (27).

Writing Assignments

1. In an essay, describe your mother, your father, or another adult who has been an important influence in your life. Use your description not only to create a portrait of the person, but also to clarify your relationship and its effect on you. In selecting details for your description, keep in mind that personality traits can be just as important, if not more so, than physical characteristics.
2. Using library sources, write a descriptive essay about a person you have never met, perhaps a present-day celebrity or a historical figure. Whether your description is objective or impressionistic, try to create a dominant impression of your subject.

Twenty-seven-twenty-two

Bob Greene

Bob Greene was born in 1947 in Columbus, Ohio. He is a syndicated columnist for the Chicago Tribune, and his column appears in 150 newspapers throughout the United States. The Pittsburgh Press called Greene "The best national columnist in his weight class," and the San Francisco Chronicle called him "Refreshingly warm, compassionate, interested, amused, and amusing. . . ." Greene has written ten books, the most recent being his study of Vietnam veterans, *Homecoming: When the Soldiers Returned from Vietnam*.

The following selection is taken from *American Beat*, a collection of Greene's essays published in 1983. In the Introduction to the book, Greene comments on his work: "I try to go out and explore something that interests me, and then—after hanging around and watching and listening and asking questions—I try to give the reader some sense of what it was like to have been there."

Bexley, Ohio—It was a vacation of sorts, perhaps the strangest I have ever taken. And, although it had none of the glamour of a flight to Mexico or Europe, it turned out to be one of the most satisfying few days I have had in years.

Of all the places I have dreamed of visiting, I have been lucky enough to visit most. And yet the place that is always most on my mind always seemed an impossible destination. Not because it is remote; it is not that far a journey from Chicago to central Ohio. Not because it is expensive, either; money is not even a factor.

But it remained unlikely because people just don't do things like this. What I wanted to do was go back to the house in which I grew up; not just look at it from a car driving by, but spend time there, visit it, remember it as it was. Several families have lived there since my own family moved away; often I have thought about

Revelly
Reveille

4/13c/85

Cats

Editor:

On Friday, April 12th, my cat, Sunshine, died from a blow to the head by the fender of a car. I had lost my friend, Sunshine, and the other person gained a tragic memory. What can we do to help prevent accidents like this? Two possible solutions came to mind.

The first possibility was to not let my other cat, Cheekie, outside ever again. After a day of listening to my cat cry by the door and remembering how happy and playful she was outside, I changed my mind. I decided that a short happy life is better than a long unhappy one and felt that Cheekie would agree. This possibility was a just sentence, not a solution. But taking it into account that she would probably be killed, I had to make a compromise. Now, Cheekie and I go outside together for 30 minutes to an hour each day. It helps ensure her safety and I have the joy of watching her play. But what about the day when my innocent wanderer

to let's say, maybe a conversation with a neighbor that's passing by. All it would take is a minute or two, Cheekie could wander and be left to the mercy of cars and the people who drive them.

What could I do as the driver of a car to help Cheekie and other people's pets to be safe? What follows is my answer. All it would take is a few minutes of your time to help keep an accident, like the one that happened to Sunshine, from happening again. Each time you go to get in your car, the following precautions could help ensure a pet's safety.

1. Look under the hood to see if a cat's in the engine or hung on the hood a few times to scare one away.
2. Blow your horn, wait about 30 seconds, blow it again and wait another 30 seconds before starting.
3. After starting, hesitate a moment then back out slowly to give a pet time to run that may be under the car.

If you feel that looking under the hood is too inconvenient, at least use the blow-the-horn method and back out slowly. Another way to cut down on pet accidents is to go slow through subdivisions and apartment areas. I'm not asking you to "crawl," but to go the speed limit. A watchful eye wouldn't hurt either.

Through Sunshine's death, I learned to take the time to care. But my efforts alone can only do so much in preventing accidents like this. I'm asking you, as the driver of a car, to care.

CHARLOTTE KYZAR

Frogs

Editor:

In the Tuesday, April 30 Reveille, there was a letter about the tragic death of one cat named Sunshine, and delightfully helpful hints on how to prevent further repetitions of the senseless cat-billings going on in our society. This letter prompted me to reveal another tragic story to you.

I had, until a few months ago, a lovely little frog named "Amphibeatur", short for AMPHIBIAN entrePENEUR. Well, one fateful day, Amphy (as we fondly abbreviated his name)

escaped from his cage. He made his way to my neighbor's yard. There, my neighbor's cat attacked and maimed poor, defenseless, wart-giving little Amphy, but not enough to kill him. My little frog, Amphy, was left to die in my neighbor's yard. But before he expired from the cat's wounds, my neighbor was mowing the grass, and accidentally splattered Amphy all over creation.

This left a trauma on my neighbor, and also on his little girl, who was riding on the mower with him. Oh, I have another frog now, Elsinore, but he'll never replace the special place in my heart that Amphy had. I have some suggestions to stop things like this from ever happening again.

First, please, people, keep your frog in a secure cage, and when letting him browse around, keep him in sight and away from tall grass.

Second, kill all the cats in your neighborhood. They are hair-balled, disloyal, cold-blooded creatures anyway, who only use you for food and a home. Everyone hates cats anyway. A good way to accomplish this is to put one under the hood of your car, and then start

the engine. You can always claim it was an accident then. Also, be aware when driving through your subdivision, in order to strike, and therefore eliminate, any cat you happen to see crossing the road.

Third, before you mow the grass, walk every square inch of your yard, looking for maimed, or even healthy, frogs. This may take a few hours, but isn't it worth a little frog's life? Also, if you have a chance to hit a cat while mowing the grass, do so. They make quite a strange noise: "Meowwroow-roosooow—thunk!"

Please, show you care.

STEPHAN KINSELLA

D.R. 5/4/85

COMMON PUNCTUATION PATTERNS

1. **Independent clause.** (or ? or !)
2. **Independent clause; independent clause.** (The ideas in each sentence should be closely related when using a semicolon.)
3. **Independent clause;** therefore, **independent clause.**
however,
nevertheless,
consequently,
furthermore,
moreover, (etc.)
4. **Independent clause,** and **independent clause.**
but
or
nor
for
so
yet
5. **Clause, phrase
or word,** nonessential clause,
phrase or word, **clause, phrase
or word.**
6. If **dependent clause,** **independent clause.**
Because
Since
When
While
Although
After (etc.)

(Note: A comma is not needed after the introductory clause if it is short or of the omission does not make reading difficult.)
7. **Independent clause** if **dependent clause.**
because
since
when
while
although
after (etc.)
8. **Independent clause:** a, b, and c.

MY SISTER

She is a girl. She stands about 5'4". She has black hair. It is naturally curly. It is cut short because it's easier to take care of. She has brown eyes. She doesn't wear any makeup. She's fairly pretty. She has pierced ears. She is 18 years old. She wears jeans and pullover tops to school. She smokes cigarettes. She wears furry socks and Reeboks; she's very picky about things everyone else does. She is very sensitive but tries to hide it by acting tough, but she can't hide it. The only thing she has for breakfast is a glass of milk. When she is done with her gum, she just rolls it up in a ball and puts it on the coffee table. Most of the time she gets in late. She is in the twelfth grade and is too lazy to get a job, and she admits it. Her report card is no big deal at all. Her hobbies are collecting giraffes and assorted stuffed animals.

Possible Controlling Statements

1. Time Order (Chronological Narration)

Let me tell you about a typical day in the life of my sister.

2. Spatial Order (Description)

From the top of her head to the bottom of her feet, my sister is one of a kind.

3. Persuasion (Inductive or deductive order depending on placement of controlling statement)

You should ask my sister for a date.

4. Break-Down Order

My sister is a lazy, hypocritical slob.

5. Relationship Order (Comparison/Contrast)

My sister can't decide if she's a little girl or a grown-up woman.

Classification Task 1

You work for your college newspaper. Your assignment is to use the notes below to write a short article that classifies the major dangers of running. Your article will appear in a special supplement on sports activities. Determine the categories you need and include each of the ideas listed below under one of the categories.

- Older runners often run too far too fast and risk heart attacks.
- Because tired runners often do not look when they cross streets, they are sometimes hit by cars.
- Some people find runners to be snobbish toward nonrunners.
- Women running alone have been prime victims of rapists.
- Regular running can strain joints, which can become a serious problem in later life.
- It has been suggested that runners have higher divorce rates than nonrunners.
- Running for some people becomes an end in itself, leading them to neglect their jobs and other responsibilities.
- Runners often suffer heat exhaustion and heat stroke in hot weather.
- Runners are often bitten by dogs.
- Runners suffer from blisters, heel spurs, and shin splints.
- Running after eating a meal can cause indigestion.
- Running has become so commercialized that many of the "extras" are now unaffordable.

D. Writing the Article

1. The thesis of the article is not stated or is not clear. The paragraphs read like a list. Although they may be grouped under a category, the relationships between sentences are not clear.
2. The article has a thesis, although perhaps not a strong one. The paragraphs have a general focus but some sentences are unrelated or strangely juxtaposed. Transitions are ineffective.
3. The article has a clear thesis and paragraphs are generally well developed with fewer than three problems with focus, unity, or coherence. Transitions may be a bit forced.
4. The article has a clear thesis and developed paragraphs that are focused, unified, and coherent. Transitions are logical and effective.

Classification Scoring Rubric

Rate individual papers on each of the variables described below.
(1 = least effective; 4 = most effective)

A. Meeting the Demands of the Rhetorical Situation

1. The writer provides no introduction.
2. The writer provides an introduction, but it suggests that he/she knows *neither* the collegiate audience nor the circumstances (i.e., writing an article for a sports supplement) of the writing task.
3. The writer provides an introduction which shows that he/she recognizes *either* the collegiate audience or the circumstances of the writing task.
4. The writer provides an introduction which shows that he/she recognizes *both* the collegiate audience and the circumstances of the writing task.

B. Establishing Categories

1. The writer establishes no categories, but instead simply lists benefits or dangers in no discernible groups.
2. The writer groups items but does not name categories. Or, the writer establishes some categories, but not enough to accommodate all items. Or, the writer names all categories, but all the categories are not conceptually distinct.
3. The writer groups items into conceptually distinct categories and names some, but not all, of the categories.
4. The writer groups all items into conceptually distinct categories and names all the categories.

C. Classifying Individual Items

1. The writer is unable to classify items because categories have not been established.
2. The writer classifies some items appropriately into categories that have been established, but fails to include 3 or more items in his/her paper.
3. The writer classifies most items appropriately into categories that have been established.
4. The writer classifies all items appropriately into categories that have been established.

SAMPLE CLASSIFICATION ESSAY

Your roommate's alarm goes off at 6:30 a.m. As you hear him rummaging through the closet for his jogging shoes, you turn over to sleep peacefully for the next hour. Later in the day, you ask your girlfriend to meet you at Murphy's after class to relax after a full day. She can't because during the free time she has this evening, she plans to run. You go without her. While your roommate and your girlfriend might chide you for being a lazy, beer guzzling out-of-shape bum, you may be better off than they are. While they can tell you the benefits of running, they may not be as aware of its great dangers to the health and social life of college students.

Regular running can pose serious health problems--strained joints, blisters, heel spurs, and shin splints, for example. Furthermore, Louisiana runners can easily suffer heat exhaustion and heat stroke in hot weather. Even young students who run too far too fast risk heart attacks. and given their busy schedules, students are likely to run early in the morning when they aren't quite alert or late at night when they are tired, risking the chance of being hit by cars when they cross streets or right after dinner when running can cause indigestion. If these health hazards aren't enough to scare you out of your running shoes, consider the possibility of being bitten by a dog or even being raped.

Even if running doesn't affect your health, it may ruin your social life. Some people find runners to be snobbish toward nonrunners. I know I sure get tired of my roommate waking me up before dawn and telling me how much better shape he is in. It wouldn't surprise me if runners have higher divorce rates than nonrunners. If my girlfriend doesn't start going with me to Murphy's, I may just find someone new. Other devoted runners spend so much money on shoes, radios, running clothes, and magazines that they don't have any left for going out to have a good time. Finally, for some people, running becomes an end in itself, leading them to neglect their jobs and other responsibilities.

So sleep late, and I'll meet you at Murphy's.

CRITERIA FOR GRADING ESSAYS**DESCRIPTION****A. THESIS**

1. You did not provide a thesis.
2. You assumed a thesis but did not state it. Or you stated a thesis, but the thesis was vague or too broad.
3. You provided an adequate thesis.
4. You provided an outstanding thesis that vividly sets up your description.

B. DEVELOPMENT

1. You had neither topic sentences nor logical development.
2.
 - a. You had topic sentences, but they were not logical.
 - b. You had logical development, but you did not provide topic sentences.
 - c. You had topic sentences, but they did not support your thesis.
 - d. You had topic sentences, but they were too broad.
3. You had both topic sentences and logical development. These provide a competent but uninspired framework for your description.
4. You had excellent topic sentences and logical development.

C. DETAIL

1.
 - a. You provide no details.
 - b. You provide details in an apparently random order.
2.
 - a. You provide some details, but they are too general and vague.
 - b. You provide some details, but too many do not belong where you place them.
3. You provide details in the proper places and provide a general picture of what you are describing.
4. Your details invoke a clear image of what you are describing.

D. WRITING THE ESSAY

1. Your essay lacks coherence and cohesion. Transitions are ineffective. The paragraphs read like a list, with no connection between the sentences
2. The paragraphs have a general focus, but some sentences are unrelated. Coherence, cohesion, and transitions need work.
3. Paragraphs are generally well developed with fewer than three problems of focus, unity, or coherence. Transitions may be a bit forced.
4. Paragraphs are focused, unified, and coherent. Transitions are logical and effective.

E. GRAMMAR

1. 10+ errors.
2. 8-9 errors.
3. 4-7 errors.
4. 1-3 errors.

NARRATIVE ESSAY**A. SELECTION OF TOPIC**

1. You selected a topic that offers no potential for insight into your life or character.
2.
 - a. You selected a topic that is so common that it offers little insight into your unique personality.
 - b. You selected a topic that you have no emotional distance from; therefore, you were unable to handle it effectively
3. You selected a topic that is generally acceptable.
4. You selected an outstanding and interesting topic.

B. PARAMETERS

1.
 - a. The parameters for your essay were far too broad, leading you to skim over the events of the story. You tried to tell too much.
 - b. You did not include events crucial to the understanding of the event.
2.
 - a. Your parameters were too broad, reducing the amount you could focus on the events.
 - b. You left out elements of the story that would have helped the understanding of the event.
3. You used adequate narrative techniques.
4. You excellently used narrative techniques such as flashback, flashforward, etc.

C. DETAIL

1.
 - a. You provide no detail or dialogue.
 - b. You provide details in an apparently random order.
2.
 - a. You provide some details, but they are too general and vague.
 - b. You provide some details, but too many do not belong where you place them.
3. You provide detail and dialogue in the proper places and provide a general picture of what you are describing.
4. Your detail and dialogue invoke a clear image of what you are describing.

D. WRITING THE ESSAY (Same as above)**E. GRAMMAR** (Same as before except for the number of mistakes permitted)

1. 10+ errors.
2. 8-9 errors.
3. 4-7 errors.
4. 1-3 errors.

PROPOSAL**A. THESIS/PROPOSED ACTION**

1. You did not provide a proposal.
2.
 - a. You assumed a proposal but did not state it.
 - b. You stated a proposal, but it was vague or too broad.
 - c. You stated a general solution, but did not provide your audience with a specific action to take.
 - d. You provided an audience with a proposal, but there is some question whether your audience can act on it.
 - e. If the audience followed your recommendation, it would not have the desired effect.
3. You provided an adequate proposal.
4. You provided an outstanding proposal that will probably bring about the change you desire.

B. AUDIENCE

1. You did not address an audience.
2.
 - a. Your audience was too broad (for example, you addressed the "readers of Time).
 - b. You started with one audience, but switched to another one.
3. Your audience was fairly well defined.
4. Your audience was well defined and you did an excellent job of addressing it.

C. DEVELOPMENT

1. You had neither topic sentences nor logical development.
2.
 - a. You had topic sentences, but they were not logical.
 - b. You had logical development, but you did not provide topic sentences.
 - c. You had topic sentences, but they did not support your thesis.
 - d. You had topic sentences that did not address the self-interest of your audience.
3. You had both topic sentences and logical development. These provide a competent but uninspired framework for your argument.
4. You had excellent topic sentences and logical development.

D. SUPPORT

1.
 - a. You provide no support
 - b. You provide support in an apparently random order.
2.
 - a. You provide some support, but they are too general and vague.
 - b. You provide some support, but too many do not belong where you place them.
 - c. Your support is of the "**crank**" variety; i.e., it is unreflective and uninformed and simply reflects popular stereotypes on the subject rather than careful research.
3. You provide support in the proper places and give a basic case for your argument
4. Your support is clear and provides a forceful case for your argument.

E. WRITING THE ESSAY

1. Your essay lacks coherence and cohesion. Transitions are ineffective. The paragraphs read like a list, with no connection between the sentences
2. The paragraphs have a general focus, but some sentences are unrelated. Coherence, cohesion, and transitions need work.
3. Paragraphs are generally well developed with fewer than three problems of focus, unity, or coherence. Transitions may be a bit forced.
4. Paragraphs are focused, unified, and coherent. Transitions are logical and effective.

F. GRAMMAR

1. 10+ errors.
2. 9 errors.
3. 4-8 errors.
4. 1-3 errors.

Richard III

By William Shakespeare

What makes *Richard III* so compelling in the 21st Century? It's still one of the most frequently produced Shakesporean plays.

In this play,

- the **Apollonian** (intelligence, rationality, psychological insight) serves
- the **Dionysian** (instinct, irrationality, loss of self in frenzy)

According to Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*, addressing the tension between the Apollonian and the Dionysian is the typical function of tragedy in the classical era (By **classical**, I mean ancient Athens of the 5th Cen B.C.).

There are some special attributes of *Richard III* that distinguish it for today.

- Richard is popular with actors because he is an actor himself, always lying to the people around him. They get to ham it up while he hams it up. He is a performer, director, observer, and critic.
- The 20th century was the century when the "demonic has siezed the rational for its own monstrous forwarding" (Weiss 200), i.e., when the Apollonian has served the Dionysian.

The Ian Mcllellan movie makes Richard & his men like Hitler & the Nazis.

Important dates the remember

- **1483-1485** Richard III reigned as King of England. He was the last medieval king.
- **1592-1593** Shakespeare composed *Richard III*. He was writing about the civil war called **the War of the Roses**, which ended with Richard's death.

Shakespeare wrote numerous plays about the **War of the Roses**. It was a civil war that affected Shakespeare's England the way the American Civil War has affected us. His characters in these plays often needed little introduction--like Abraham Lincoln and Robert E. Lee, they were already familiar to his audience and only needed to be trotted out to play their expected roles

Richard III was the fourth in a series of plays called Shakespeare's **First Tetralogy**. (A tetralogy is a series of four, just as a trilogy is a series of three.).



The First Tetralogy

1. *King Henry VI, Part I*
2. *King Henry VI, Part II*
3. *King Henry VI, Part III*
4. *Richard III*

Weiss compares these four to the classic tradition of presenting three tragedies, followed by a satyr-play (Weiss 200). A satyr play was a burlesque, funny play to conclude the more serious tragedies.

Sources Shakespeare used

1. Historical sources: The War of the Roses. Why was it called that? The warring houses were each represented by roses.

	The House of Lancaster	the Red Rose
	The House of York	the White Rose

2. Political Philosophy

Machiavelli had written the infamous book on politics, *The Prince*. It described the amoral political behavior of Italian Renaissance rulers. Shakespeare makes his Richard an example of the Machiavellian prince even though he lived before Machiavelli. This is an **anachronism**, where something takes place before it really could. The movie we'll watch is full of anachronisms, which are intentional.

3. Medieval Drama. The Morality stories portrayed various allegorical characters. Richard at one point plays the Vice, a character noted by cheerful evil. Shakespeare is influenced by these old dramas.
4. Classical Drama. Shakespeare is especially influenced by Seneca, a Roman poet / philosopher / statesman. Seneca wrote 10 dramas based on earlier Greek works. In Seneca's *Atreus*, Furies pursue the house of Tantalus. Atreus is a king who pretends to make up with his brother Thyestes to exact revenge. He kills his nephews, cooks them, and feeds them to his unsuspecting brother. Like Richard, he revels in his evil. The Furies in *Richard III* are the women who follow him around cursing him.

Objectively, Richard and Richmond (who became Henry VII) behave in similar ways.

- They kill off the king to take the throne themselves.
- They marry a woman from the other camp so they can solidify their claim to the throne.
- Richard was actually brave. He was the last king of England to die in battle. Kings since then have led from behind.

Why then does Shakespeare make this a case of good versus evil?

- a. It's better drama that way.
- b. It's the traditional way of portraying Richard III.
- c. The **Tudor Myth**. Henry VII (Richmond) founded the Tudor Dynasty after killing off Richard III. To strengthen his claim on the throne, which he won from the crowned king in a rebellion, he had to make Richard look as bad as possible. Henry VII's granddaughter, Elizabeth, was Shakespeare's queen. For him to undermine her legitimacy by questioning her rebel grandfather's right to rule would be politically incorrect in an era when being politically incorrect could mean that you lose your head.

Elizabeth had been declared illegitimate by the Catholic church because she was Protestant. Shakespeare makes Henry VII / Richmond look good to make Elizabeth look good. Therefore, Richard III must look bad. For a more balanced evaluation of Richard, try the [Richard III Society](http://www.richardiii.net/) (<http://www.richardiii.net/>).

Richard III works on both the natural level and supernatural / mythic levels. These are 2 levels of causation, supernatural and natural. These correspond to allegory versus realism, the two major representational techniques in the 1590s.

Mythic / Allegorical	Natural / Realistic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● He is evil incarnate, the Vice of medieval plays. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Vice uses asides, ○ tells the audience his plans, ○ boasts about his own power and depravity, ○ attacks others, ○ pretends to be a victim himself. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● He is evil because his mom doesn't love him. ● People look down at him because of his birth defect. Like us, they tend to judge a book by its cover. His external defect in the theory of the time reflected internal evil ● He feels inferior and despises himself.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Furies (cursing women) pursue him. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Richmond defeats him. A bland cipher of a character. Richard is much more appealing.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● His dreams are supernatural omens. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● His dreams are the product of a bad conscience & self-loathing.

Richard draws us into his evil & makes us participate in it.