Chapter 1

From your previous schooling, you are probably familiar with the term thesis in which you statement, which is the main point a writer wants to make in an essay.

Is actually the writer's one-sentence summary answer to this question, and it is this question that has motivated the writer's thinking.
As you progress through your college career, you will find yourself increasingly engaged with the kinds of questions that motivate your professors. All around college campuses you'll find clusters of professors and students asking questions about all manner of problems ranging from puzzles in the reproductive cycles of worms and bugs to the changing portrayal of race and gender in American films.

The kinds of questions that stimulate the writing most valued in college are open-ended questions that focus on unknowns or invite multiple points of view. For Kilcup, a good question sets the writer on the path of inquiry, critical thinking, analysis, and argument.

What Is Rhetoric? At the broadest level, rhetoric is the study of how human beings use language and other symbols to influence the attitudes, beliefs, and actions of others. Rhetoricians study, among other things, how these symbols arise within a given culture and how they influence others.

In a narrower sense, rhetoric is the art of making messages persuasive.

Purpose as a Desire to bring Something New or Contestable to Your Reader: One powerful way to think about purpose is to focus on what is new or controversial (contestable—capable of being contested) in your paper. For most essays, you can write a one-sentence, nutshell statement about your purpose.

The writing projects in Part 2 of this textbook are based on six different rhetorical aims: to express, to explore, to inform, to analyze/ synthesize, to persuade, and to reflect.

In assessing your audience, you must first determine who that audience is—a single reader (for example, your boss), a select group (a scholarship committee; readers of a particular blog), or a general audience. If you imagine a general audience, you will need to make some initial assumptions about their views and values and about their current attitude toward your subject.

Questions to Ask about Your Audience Reasons for Asking the Question

How busy are my readers?
• Helps you decide on length, document design, and methods of organization (see Concept 1.3 on open versus closed forms).
• In workplace writing, busy readers usually appreciate tightly organized prose with headings that allow for skimming.
What are my readers' motives for?
• If the reader has requested the document, he or she will reading?
probably already be interested in what you say.
• In most cases, you need to hook your readers' interest and keep them engaged.
What is my relationship with my?
• Helps you decide on a formal or informal style readers?
• Helps you select tone—polite and serious or loose and slangy

How Writers Think about Genre

The term genre refers to categories of writing that follow certain conventions of style, structure, approach to subject matter, and document design. Table 1.3 shows different kinds of genres. The concept of genre creates strong reader expectations, placing specific demands on writers. How you write any given letter, report, or article is

Influenced by the structure and style of hundreds of previous letters, reports, or articles written.

The concept of genre raises intriguing and sometimes unsettling questions about the relationship of the unique self to a social convention or tradition.

Distinctions between Closed and Open Forms of Writing

Closed-Form Prose: Rockwood's letter illustrates tightly closed-form prose (far left on the continuum), which we can define as writing with a hierarchical structure of points and details in support of an explicit thesis. It is characterized by unified and coherent paragraphs, topic sentences, transitions between sentences and paragraphs, and forecasting of the whole before presentation of the parts.

Open-Form Prose: In contrast, Merton's "A Festival of Rain" falls toward the right end of the closed-to-open continuum. Open-form prose resists reduction to a single, summarizable thesis. It is characterized by narrative or story-like structure, sometimes with abrupt transitions, and uses various literary techniques to make the prose memorable and powerful.

Closed-Form

• thesis explicitly stated in
• thesis appears near end
introduction
• text reads as a mystery
• all parts of essay linked
• reader held in suspense
clearly to thesis
• body paragraphs develop
thesis
• body paragraphs have topic
sentences
• structure forecasted
h

Open-ended Form

• essay organized around a
• often organized chronologically
question rather than a thesisor has storylike
elements
• essay explores the problem
• often used to heighten or
or question, looking at it in
deepen a problem, or show
many ways
its human significance
• writer may or may not arrive
• often has an implicit theme
at thesis
rather than a thesis
• often violates rules of
closed-form prose by using
literary techniques

Chapter 2

*Cognitive psychologists call these beautiful problems "ill-structured." An illstructured problem has competing solutions, requiring the thinker to argue for the best solution in the absence of full and complete data or in the presence of stakeholders with different backgrounds, assumptions, beliefs, and values. In contrast, a "well-structured" problem eventually yields a correct answer. Math problems that can be solved by applying the right formulae and processes are well structured; they yield single, agreed upon "right answers."

CriTiCal Thinking SkillS needed for "WalloWing in ComplexiTy"

• The ability to pose problematic questions

• The ability to analyze a problem in all its dimensions—to define its key terms, determine its causes, understand its history, appreciate its human dimension and its connection to one's own personal experience, and appreciate what makes it problematic or complex.
• The ability (and determination) to find, gather, and interpret facts, data, and other information relevant to the problem (often involving library, Internet, or field research)
• The ability to imagine alternative solutions to the problem, to see different ways in which the question might be answered and different perspectives for viewing it
• The ability to analyze competing approaches and answers, to construct arguments for and against alternatives, and to choose the best solution in light of values, objectives, and other criteria that you determine and articulate
• The ability to write an effective argument justifying your choice while acknowledging counterarguments

Freewriting, also sometimes called nonstop writing or silent, sustained writing, asks you to record your thinking directly. To freewrite, put pen to paper (or sit at your computer screen, perhaps turning off the monitor so that you can't see what you are writing) and write rapidly, nonstop, for ten to fifteen minutes at a stretch. Don't worry about grammar, spelling, organization, transitions, or other features of edited writing.

Focused Freewriting: Freewriting, as we have just described it, can be quick and associational, like brainstorming aloud on paper. Focused freewriting, in contrast, is less associational and aimed more at developing a line of thought. You wrestle with a specific problem or question, trying to think and write your way into its complexity and multiple points of view.

Idea Mapping Another good technique for exploring ideas is idea mapping, a more visual method than freewriting. To make an idea map, draw a circle in The center of a page and write down your broad topic area (or a triggering question or your thesis) inside the circle. Then record your ideas on branches and subbranches that extend out from the center circle. As long as you pursue one train of thought, keep recording your ideas on subbranches off the main branch. But As soon as that chain of ideas runs dry, go back and start a new branch.

Dialectic Conversation Another effective way to explore the complexity of a topic is through dialectic discussions with others, whether in class, over coffee in the student union, late at night in bull sessions, or online in blogs or discussion boards. Good ones are dialectic—participants with differing views on a topic try to understand each other and resolve their differences by examining contradictions in each person's position.

Playing the believing and Doubting game One of the best ways to explore a question is to play what writing theorist Peter Elbow calls the "believing and doubting game." This game helps you appreciate the power of alternative arguments and points of view by urging you to formulate and explore alternative positions. To play the game, you imagine a possible answer to a problematic Question and then systematically try first to believe that answer and then to doubt it.

To change your reader's view of your subject, you must first imagine how the reader would view the subject before reading your essay. Then you can Articulate how you aim to change that view. A useful exercise is to write out the "before" and "after" views of your imagined readers

<u>You can change your reader's view of a subject in several ways.*</u>

1. You can enlarge your reader's view. Writing that enlarges a view is primarily informational. It provides new ideas and data to a reader's store of knowledge about the subject.
You could report your researched findings on this problem in an informative paper. (Before reading my paper, readers would be uncertain how France stores nuclear waste. After reading my paper, my readers would understand the French methods, possibly helping us better understand our options in the United States.)

2. You can clarify your reader's view of something that was previously fuzzy, tentative, or uncertain. Writing of this kind often explains, analyzes, or interprets. This is the kind of writing you do when you analyze a short story, a painting, an historical document, a set of economic data, or other puzzling phenomena or when you speculate on the cause, consequence, purpose, or function of something. Suppose you are analyzing the persuasive strategies used by various clothing ads. You are intrigued by a jeans ad that you "read" differently from your classmates. (Before reading my paper, my readers will think that this jeans ad reveals a liberated woman, but after reading my paper they will see that the ad reinforces traditional gender stereotypes.)

3. You can restructure readers' whole view of a subject. Such essays persuade readers to change their minds or urge them to action.
For example, engineer David Rockwood, in his letter to the editor, wants to change readers' views about wind power (see Chapter 1, p. 15). (Before reading my letter, readers will believe that wind-generated electricity can solve our energy crisis, but after reading my letter, they will see that the hope of wind power is a pipe dream.)

Another element of a surprising thesis is tension. By tension we mean the reader's sensation of being pulled away from familiar ideas toward new, unfamiliar ones. A strategy for creating this tension—a strategy we call "surprising reversal"— is to contrast your surprising answer to a question with your targeted audience's common answer, creating tension between your own thesis and one or more alternative views.

One of the best ways to employ this strategy is to begin your thesis statement with an "although" clause that summarizes the reader's "before" view or the counterclaim that your essay opposes; the main clause states the surprising view or position that your essay will support. You may choose to omit the although clause from your actual essay, but formulating it first will help you achieve focus and surprise in your thesis.

EXAMPLE:

Question

- What effect has the cell phone had on our culture?

Thesis without Tension
The invention of the cell phone has brought many advantages to our culture.
Thesis with Tension
Although the cell phone has brought many advantages to our culture, it may also have contributed to an increase in risky behavior among boaters and hikers.

In the example, the thesis without tension (cell phones have brought advantages to our culture) is a truism with which everyone would agree and hence lacks. The thesis with tension places this truism (the reader's "before" view) in an although clause and goes on to make a surprising or contestable assertion. The idea that the cell phone contributes to risky behavior among outdoor enthusiasts alters our initial, complacent view of the cell phone and gives us new ideas to think about.

The writer's goal is to surprise the reader in some way, thereby bringing about some kind of change in the reader's view.

Problematic question: What can cities do to prevent traffic congestion?
One possible thesis: Although many people think that little can be done to get people out of their beloved cars, new light-rail systems in many cities have attracted former car commuters and alleviated traffic problems.
Intended audience: Residents of cities concerned about traffic congestion but skeptical about light-rail
Kinds of evidence needed to support thesis: Examples of cities with successful light-rail systems; evidence that many riders switched from driving cars; evidence that light-rail alleviated traffic problems

Features of an Effective Introduction (PDF Page 189)

• Topic area and context. Readers need early on to know the specific topic area of the paper they are about to read—in this case a paper about the Experience Music Project in Seattle rather than, say, shower mold or medieval queenship. Sometimes writers also use a startling scene or statistic as an " attention grabber" as part of the opening context.

• A direct or implied question. As soon as possible, readers need to know how the topic area gives rise to a problem, question, or issue that the writer will examine. In this case, Jackie Wyngaard implies her question: Will EMP live up to my expectations as a museum of rock history? Note that her question appears directly in her title: "EMP: Music History or Music Trivia?"

• An indication of how the question invites tension, has evoked controversy, or is otherwise problematic. Jackie indicates that the EMP has generated "heated discussions" among a range of audiences about its commercialism and the value of its exhibits. She gives the question further tension by contrasting her initial expectations with her later disappointment.

• An indication of how the question is significant or worth examining. In order to avoid a "so what?" response, writers must motivate readers' interes in the question. Somebody might say, "Who cares about EMP anyway?" Jackie's strategy is to imagine an audience who shares her interest in rock and roll music and her love of music history.

Strategies for Introducing Your Problem to Targeted readers

• Provide background where needed
• State the problem directly (often as a grammatical question ending with a question mark) or imply the question through context
• Summarize the different points of view on the problem (or)
• Summarize the particular point of view you intend to "push against"
• Summarize controversy in more depth
• Explain why the problem is problematic (show why there are no easy answers to the problem; point out weaknesses in proposed answers; show the history of attempts to solve the problem)
• Show why the problem is important (answer the "so what?" question)

• Show how solving the problem will bring good consequences (or)
• Show how answering the question will help us begin to answer a larger question
• Describe the artifact or phenomenon you are writing about and point to the specific features where you see an inconsistency, gap, or puzzle
• State the problem directly (often as a grammatical question
• Show how there isn't any immediate, easy answer to the question or problem or how the question can invite controversy/discussion; you can often employ a template such as the following:

- Some people might think . . . , but closer observation shows that. . . .
- At first I thought . . . , but later I saw that. . . .
- Part of me thinks . . . , but another part of me thinks that. . . .
- I expected . . . ; but what I actually found was. . . .
- Show why the problem is important (answer the "so what?" question)
- Show how solving the problem will bring good consequences (or)
- Show how answering this question will help us begin to answer a larger question