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## Chapter 15

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### Readings: Examples of Essays

## 15.1 Introduction to Sample Essays

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Identify the role of reading in the writing process.
2. Read examples of the rhetorical modes.

This chapter contains quality samples of the rhetorical modes described in [Chapter 10 "Rhetorical Modes"](#). While you read these essays, remember the purpose of the writing and pay attention to the following:

- **Thesis statement.** What is the author's main point of the essay? Identify the sentence and see how well it is supported throughout the essay.
- **Topic sentence.** How well does each topic sentence support the thesis, and how well does it describe the main idea of the following paragraph?
- **Supporting evidence.** Identify the evidence that the author uses to support the essay's main ideas, and gauge their credibility.

The best way to become a better writer is to become a closer reader. As you read each essay carefully take note of the content and the structure as well as the thesis statement, topic sentences, and supporting evidence. These should shape your response to the essay and should also shape your writing.

## 15.2 Narrative Essay

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE

1. Read an example of the narrative rhetorical mode.

### My College Education

The first class I went to in college was philosophy, and it changed my life forever. Our first assignment was to write a short response paper to the Albert Camus essay “The Myth of Sisyphus.” I was extremely nervous about the assignment as well as college. However, through all the confusion in philosophy class, many of my questions about life were answered.

I entered college intending to earn a degree in engineering. I always liked the way mathematics had right and wrong answers. I understood the logic and was very good at it. So when I received my first philosophy assignment that asked me to write my interpretation of the Camus essay, I was instantly confused. What is the right way to do this assignment, I wondered? I was nervous about writing an incorrect interpretation and did not want to get my first assignment wrong. Even more troubling was that the professor refused to give us any guidelines on what he was looking for; he gave us total freedom. He simply said, “I want to see what you come up with.”

Full of anxiety, I first set out to read Camus’s essay several times to make sure I really knew what it was about. I did my best to take careful notes. Yet even after I took all these notes and knew the essay inside and out, I still did not know the right answer. What was my interpretation? I could think of a million different ways to interpret the essay, but which one was my professor looking for? In math class, I was used to examples and explanations of solutions. This assignment gave me nothing; I was completely on my own to come up with my individual interpretation.

Next, when I sat down to write, the words just did not come to me. My notes and ideas were all present, but the words were lost. I decided to try every prewriting strategy I could find. I brainstormed, made idea maps, and even wrote an outline. Eventually, after a lot of stress, my ideas became more organized and the words fell on the page. I had my interpretation of “The Myth of Sisyphus,” and I had my main reasons for interpreting the essay. I remember being unsure of myself, wondering if what I was saying made sense, or if I was even on the right track. Through all the uncertainty, I continued writing the best I could. I finished the conclusion paragraph, had my spouse proofread it for errors, and turned it in the next day simply hoping for the best.

Then, a week or two later, came judgment day. The professor gave our papers back to us with grades and comments. I remember feeling simultaneously afraid and eager to get the paper back in my hands. It turned out, however, that I had nothing to worry about. The professor gave me an A on the paper, and his notes suggested that I wrote an effective essay overall. He wrote that my reading of the essay was very original and that my thoughts were well organized. My relief and newfound confidence upon reading his comments could not be overstated.

What I learned through this process extended well beyond how to write a college paper. I learned to be open to new challenges. I never expected to enjoy a philosophy class and always expected to be a math and science person. This class and assignment, however, gave me the self-confidence, critical-thinking skills, and courage to try a new career path. I left engineering and went on to study law and eventually became a lawyer. More important, that class and paper helped me understand education differently. Instead of seeing college as a direct stepping stone to a career, I learned to see college as a place to first learn and then seek a career or enhance an existing career. By giving me the space to express my own interpretation and to argue for my own values, my philosophy class taught me the importance of education for education's sake. That realization continues to pay dividends every day.

### Online Narrative Essay Alternatives

Sandra Cisneros offers an example of a narrative essay in *Only Daughter* that captures her sense of her Chicana-Mexican heritage as the only daughter in a family of seven children.

Her complete essay is available on several websites, including the following:

- <http://distelrath.wikispaces.com/file/view/Only+Daughter.doc>
- <http://www.cabrillo.edu/academics/english/100resources/'Only%20Daughter'.pdf>
- [http://www.tbaisd.k12.mi.us/departments/docs\\_gen/pacing/ela12-6/9thGrade/9-4/Only\\_Daughter.pdf](http://www.tbaisd.k12.mi.us/departments/docs_gen/pacing/ela12-6/9thGrade/9-4/Only_Daughter.pdf)

Gary Shteyngart came to the United States when he was seven years old. The son of Russian Jewish parents who struggled to provide a better life for their son, he reflects on his struggles, including becoming “American,” in *Sixty-Nine Cents*:

- [http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2007/09/03/070903fa\\_fact\\_shteyngart?printable=true#ixzz0pihck7DS](http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2007/09/03/070903fa_fact_shteyngart?printable=true#ixzz0pihck7DS)
- <http://www.america.gov/st/peopleplace-english/2009/February/20090213084900mlenuhret0.8106806.html>

Sherman Alexie grew up on the Spokane Reservation in Washington State. He chronicles his challenges in school, starting in first grade, in *Indian Education*:

- <http://comosr.spps.org/Alexie.html>
- [http://www.forsyth.k12.ga.us/132320728102659810/lib/132320728102659810/files/Alexie, Sherman - Indian Education TEXT.rtf](http://www.forsyth.k12.ga.us/132320728102659810/lib/132320728102659810/files/Alexie,_Sherman_-_Indian_Education_TEXT.rtf)
- <http://www.pfeonyx.com/alliance/IndianCollection/Alexie2.pdf>

## 15.3 Illustration Essay

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE

1. Read an example of the illustration rhetorical mode.

Letter to the City

To: Lakeview Department of Transportation

From: A Concerned Citizen

The intersection of Central Avenue and Lake Street is dangerous and demands immediate consideration for the installation of a controlling mechanism. I have lived in Lakeview my entire life, and during that time I have witnessed too many accidents and close calls at that intersection. I would like the Department of Transportation to answer this question: how many lives have to be lost on the corner of Central Avenue and Lake Street before a street light or stop sign is placed there?

Over the past twenty years, the population of Lakeview has increased dramatically. This population growth has put tremendous pressure on the city's roadways, especially Central Avenue and its intersecting streets. At the intersection of Central Avenue and Lake Street it is easy to see how serious this problem is. For example, when I try to cross Central Avenue as a pedestrian, I frequently wait over ten minutes for the cars to clear, and even then I must rush to the median. I will then have to continue to wait until I can finally run to the other side of the street. On one hand, even as a physically fit adult, I can run only with significant effort and care. Expecting a senior citizen or a child to cross this street, on the other hand, is extremely dangerous and irresponsible. Does the city have any plans to do anything about this?

Recent data show that the intersection of Central Avenue and Lake Street has been especially dangerous. According to the city's own statistics, three fatalities occurred at that intersection in the past year alone. Over the past five years, the intersection witnessed fourteen car accidents, five of which were fatal. These numbers officially qualify the intersection as the most fatal and dangerous in the entire state. It should go without saying that fatalities and accidents are not the clearest way of measuring the severity of this situation because for each accident that happens, countless other close calls never contribute to city data. I hope you will agree that these numbers alone are sufficient evidence that the intersection at Central Avenue and Lake Street is hazardous and demands immediate attention.

Nearly all accidents mentioned are caused by vehicles trying to cross Central Avenue while driving on Lake Street. I think the City of Lakeview should consider placing a traffic light there to control the traffic going both ways. While I do not have access to any resources or data that can show precisely how much a traffic light can improve the intersection, I think you will agree that a controlled busy intersection is much safer than an uncontrolled one. Therefore, at a minimum, the city must consider making the intersection a four-way stop.

Each day that goes by without attention to this issue is a lost opportunity to save lives and make the community a safer, more enjoyable place to live. Because the safety of citizens is the priority of every government, I can only expect that the Department of Transportation and the City of Lakeview will act on this matter immediately. For the safety and well-being of Lakeview citizens, please do not let bureaucracy or money impede this urgent project.

Sincerely,

A Concerned Citizen

### Online Illustration Essay Alternatives

Lewis Thomas provides several illustrative examples in *On Natural Death*:

- <http://thefloatinglibrary.com/2009/03/05/on-natural-death-lewis-thomas>

Jessica Bennett, a senior writer for *Newsweek*, offers an example of an illustration essay when she presents *The Flip Side of Internet Fame*:

- <http://www.newsweek.com/2008/02/21/the-flip-side-of-internet-fame.html>

## 15.4 Descriptive Essay

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE

1. Read an example of the descriptive rhetorical mode.

### America's Pastime

As the sun hits my face and I breathe in the fresh air, I temporarily forget that I am at a sporting event. But when I open my eyes and look around, I am reminded of all things American. From the national anthem to the international players on the field, all the sights and sounds of a baseball game come together like a slice of Americana pie.

First, the entrance turnstiles click and clank, and then a hallway of noise bombards me. All the fans voices coalesce in a chorus of sound, rising to a humming clamor. The occasional, "Programs, get your programs, here!" jumps out through the hum to get my attention. I navigate my way through the crowded walkways of the stadium, moving to the right of some people, to the left of others, and I eventually find the section number where my seat is located. As I approach my seat I hear the announcer's voice echo around the ball park, "Attention fans. In honor of our country, please remove your caps for the singing of the national anthem." His deep voice echoes around each angle of the park, and every word is heard again and again. The crowd sings and hums "The Star-Spangled Banner," and I feel a surprising amount of national pride through the voices. I take my seat as the umpire shouts, "Play ball!" and the game begins.

In the fifth inning of the game, I decide to find a concessions stand. Few tastes are as American as hot dogs and soda pop, and they cannot be missed at a ball game. The smell of hot dogs carries through the park, down every aisle, and inside every concourse. They are always as unhealthy as possible, dripping in grease, while the buns are soft and always too small for the dog. The best way to wash down the Ball Park Frank is with a large soda pop, so I order both. Doing my best to balance the cold pop in one hand and the wrapped-up dog in the other, I find the nearest condiments stand to load up my hot dog. A dollop of bright green relish and chopped onions, along with two squirts of the ketchup and mustard complete the dog. As I continue the balancing act between the loaded hot dog and pop back to my seat, a cheering fan bumps into my pop hand. The pop splashes out of the cup and all over my shirt, leaving me drenched. I make direct eye contact with the man who bumped into me and he looks me in the eye, looks at my shirt, tells me how sorry he is, and then I just shake my head and keep walking. "It's all just part of the experience," I tell myself.

Before I am able to get back to my seat, I hear the crack of a bat, followed by an uproar from the crowd. Everyone is standing, clapping, and cheering. I missed a home run. I find my aisle and ask everyone to excuse me as I slip past them to my seat. “Excuse me. Excuse me. Thank you. Thank you. Sorry,” is all I can say as I inch past each fan. Halfway to my seat I can hear discarded peanut shells crunch beneath my feet, and each step is marked with a pronounced crunch.

When I finally get to my seat I realize it is the start of the seventh inning stretch. I quickly eat my hot dog and wash it down with what is left of my soda pop. The organ starts playing and everyone begins to sing “Take Me Out to the Ball Game.” While singing the song, putting my arms around friends and family with me, I watch all the players taking the field. It is wonderful to see the overwhelming amount of players on one team from around the world: Japan, the Dominican Republic, the United States, Canada, and Venezuela. I cannot help but feel a bit of national pride at this realization. Seeing the international representation on the field reminds me of the ways that Americans, though from many different backgrounds and places, still come together under common ideals. For these reasons and for the whole experience in general, going to a Major League Baseball game is the perfect way to glimpse a slice of Americana.

### Online Descriptive Essay Alternatives

Susan Berne visits New York and describes her impressions in *Where Nothing Says Everything*, also called *Ground Zero*:

- <http://thepurpleenglishteacher.files.wordpress.com/2010/10/groundzero.pdf>
- <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/04/21/travel/where-nothing-says-everything.html>

Heather Rogers provides a detailed description (book excerpt) of a landfill that challenges the reader to consider his or her own consumption and waste in *The Hidden Life of Garbage*:

- <http://www.alternet.org/story/27116>
- [http://books.google.com/books?id=efUymAhM\\_tAC&pg=PA12&lpg=PA12&dq=the+hidden+life+of+garbage+by+heather+rogers+%22in+the+dark+chill+](http://books.google.com/books?id=efUymAhM_tAC&pg=PA12&lpg=PA12&dq=the+hidden+life+of+garbage+by+heather+rogers+%22in+the+dark+chill+)

of+early+  
morning%22&source=bl&ots=7c4hoFLhTp&sig=ngecGSS27blb9zoy8wLa  
JX8la\_o&hl=  
en&ei=Vi7xTKDKG4zSsAP2hdGtCw&sa=X&oi=book\_result&ct=result&re  
snum=1&ved=0CBgQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false

## 15.5 Classification Essay

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE

1. Read an example of the classification rhetorical mode.

### Types of Higher Education Programs

Today's students have many choices when it comes to pursuing a degree: four-year programs, two-year programs, large or small classroom settings, and even daytime or evening classes. With all the different options to consider, potential students should learn about the different types of colleges so they can find a school that best fits their personality, budget, and educational goals.

One type of higher education program for students to consider is a liberal arts college. These schools tend to be small in size and offer a range of undergraduate degrees in subjects like English, history, psychology, and education. Students may choose a liberal arts college if they want a more intimate classroom setting rather than large lecture-style classes. Students may also consider a liberal arts college if they want to gain knowledge from a variety of disciplines, rather than focus on a single area of study. Many liberal arts schools are privately owned, and some have religious affiliations. Liberal arts schools can come with a hefty price tag, and their high cost presents an obstacle for students on a tight budget; moreover, while some students might appreciate a liberal arts school's intimate atmosphere, others might encounter a lack of diversity in the student body. Still, students seeking a well-rounded education in the humanities will find liberal arts colleges to be one option.

Universities, another type of higher education program, offer both undergraduate and graduate degrees. Usually universities are larger than colleges and can accommodate tens of thousands of students in many different majors and areas of study. A large student body means that class sizes are often larger, and some classes may be taught by graduate students rather than professors. Students will feel at home at a university if they want a focused academic program and state-of-the-art research facilities. While some universities are private, many are public, which means they receive funding from the government, so tuition is more affordable and some even offer discounted in-state tuition for state residents. Also, universities attract many international students, so those looking for a variety of campus cultural groups and clubs will appreciate a greater sense of diversity among the student body. Universities can be overwhelming for some, but they are the right fit for students who seek research opportunities and academic studies, especially in the fields of mathematics and science.

Community college is a type of higher education program popular with students on a limited budget who want to take college courses but may not know what they want to major in. Most schools offer degrees after two years of study, usually an associate's degree that prepares students to enter the work force; many students choose to study at a community college for two years and then transfer to a four-year college to complete their undergraduate degree. Like liberal arts schools, classes are small and allow instructors to pay more attention to their students. Community college allows students to live at home rather than in a dormitory, which also keeps costs down. While some young people might not like the idea of living at home for school, many adults choose to attend community college so they can advance their education while working and living with their families.

Online universities are another type of higher education program that are gaining popularity as technology improves. These schools offer many of the same degree programs as traditional liberal arts colleges and universities. Unlike traditional programs, which require students to attend classes and lectures, online universities offer greater academic flexibility and are a great option for students wishing to pursue a degree while still working full time. At online universities, students access course materials, such as video lectures and assessments, remotely using a personal computer and are able to speed up or slow down their progress to complete their degree at their own pace. Students may attend classes in the comfort of their own home or a local library, but students hoping for the social community of higher education might not enjoy this aspect of higher education.

With so many colleges and universities to choose from, it may be difficult for a student to narrow down his or her selection, but once a student knows what he or she is looking for, the process may become much easier. It is very important for students to learn about the different types of higher education programs available before making their selections.

### Online Classification Essay Alternatives

Amy Tan describes relationship with her heritage, her mother, and her languages in *Mother Tongue*:

- <http://www.scribd.com/doc/13297165/Mother-Tongue-By-Amy-Tan-I-Am-Not-A>

- [http://learning.swc.hccs.edu/members/donna.gordon/sum-2010-engl-1301-5-wk-crn-33454/1301-reading-block-crn-33454/Tan\\_Mother%20Tongue.pdf](http://learning.swc.hccs.edu/members/donna.gordon/sum-2010-engl-1301-5-wk-crn-33454/1301-reading-block-crn-33454/Tan_Mother%20Tongue.pdf)
- <http://teachers.sduhsd.k12.ca.us/mcunningham/grapes/mother%20tounge.pdf>

Jonathan Koppell discusses anonymity, your name, and how the Internet has changed in *On the Internet, There's No Place to Hide*:

- [http://www.newamerica.net/publications/articles/2000/on\\_the\\_internet\\_theres\\_no\\_place\\_to\\_hide](http://www.newamerica.net/publications/articles/2000/on_the_internet_theres_no_place_to_hide)

## 15.6 Process Analysis Essay

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE

1. Read an example of the process analysis rhetorical mode.

### How to Grow Tomatoes from a Seedling

Growing tomatoes is a simple and rewarding task, and more people should be growing them. This paper walks readers through the main steps for growing and maintaining patio tomatoes from a seedling.

The first step in growing tomatoes is determining if you have the appropriate available space and sunlight to grow them. All tomato varieties require full sunlight, which means at least six hours of direct sun every day. If you have south-facing windows or a patio or backyard that receives direct sunlight, you should be able to grow tomatoes. Choose the location that receives the most sun.

Next, you need to find the right seedling. Growing tomatoes and other vegetables from seeds can be more complicated (though it is not difficult), so I am only discussing how to grow tomatoes from a seedling. A seedling, for those who do not know, is typically understood as a young plant that has only recently started growing from the seed. It can be anything from a newly germinated plant to a fully flowering plant. You can usually find tomato seedlings at your local nursery for an affordable price. Less than five dollars per plant is a common price. When choosing the best seedling, look for a plant that is short with healthy, full leaves and no flowers. This last point tends to be counterintuitive, but it is extremely important. You do not want a vegetable plant that has already started flowering in the nursery because it will have a more difficult time adapting to its new environment when you replant it. Additionally, choose a plant with one strong main stem. This is important because the fewer stems that a tomato plant has, the more easily it can transport nutrients to the fruit. Multiple stems tend to divide nutrients in less efficient ways, often resulting in either lower yields or smaller fruit.

Once you have found the right seedlings to plant back home, you need to find the best way of planting them. I recommend that you plant your tomatoes in containers. If you have the space and sunlight, then you can certainly plant them in the ground, but a container has several advantages and is usually most manageable for the majority of gardeners. The containers can be used in the house, on a patio, or anywhere in the backyard, and they are portable. Containers also tend to better regulate moisture and drain excess water. Choose a container that is at least 10 inches in diameter and at least 1 foot deep. This will provide sufficient room for root development.

In addition to the container, you also need the appropriate soil mixture and draining mechanisms. For the best drainage, fill the bottom of your container with 2 or 3 inches of gravel. On top of the gravel, fill  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the container with soil. Choose a well-balanced organic soil. The three main ingredients you will find described on soil bags are N-P-K—that is, nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. Without going into too much detail about the role of each element in plant growth, I will tell you that an average vegetable will grow fine in a 10-5-5 mixture. This ratio, too, will be easy to find at your local nursery.

Once you have the gravel in the bottom of the container and the soil on top, you are ready to transplant the tomato. Pick up the tomato in the plastic container it comes in from the nursery. Turn it upside down, and holding the stem between your fingers, pat the bottom lightly several times, and the plant should fall into your hand. Next, you should gently break up the root ball that formed in the nursery container with your hands. Be gentle, but be sure to rip them up a bit; this helps generate new root growth in the new container. Be careful not to damage the roots too much, as this could stunt the growth or even destroy the plant altogether.

Next, carve out a hole in the soil to make space for the plant. Make it deep enough to go about an inch higher than it was previously buried and wide enough so all the roots can comfortably fit within and beneath it. Place the seedling in the hole and push the removed soil back on top to cover the base of the plant. After that, the final step in planting your tomato is mulch. Mulch is not necessary for growing plants, but it can be very helpful in maintaining moisture, keeping out weeds, and regulating soil temperature. Place 2–3 inches of mulch above the soil and spread it out evenly.

Once the mulch is laid, you are mostly done. The rest is all watering, waiting, and maintenance. After you lay the mulch, pour the plant a heavy amount of water. Water the plant at its base until you see water coming through the bottom of the container. Wait ten minutes, and repeat. This initial watering is very important for establishing new roots. You should continue to keep the soil moist, but never soaking wet. One healthy watering each morning should be sufficient for days without rain. You can often forego watering on days with moderate rainfall. Watering in the morning is preferable to the evening because it lessens mold and bacteria growth.

Choosing to grow the patio variety of tomatoes is easiest because patio tomatoes do not require staking or training around cages. They grow in smaller spaces and have a determinate harvest time. As you continue to water and monitor your plant, prune unhealthy looking leaves to the main stem, and cut your tomatoes down at the stem when they ripen to your liking. As you can see, growing tomatoes can be very easy and manageable for even novice gardeners. The satisfaction of picking and eating fresh food, and doing it yourself, outweighs all the effort you put in over the growing season.

### Online Process Analysis Essay Alternatives:

Stanley Fish, a professor of humanities and law at Florida International University, tells us why *Getting Coffee Is Hard to Do*:

- <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/06/opinion/06iht-edfish.1.7000425.html>
- <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/08/04/getting-coffee-is-hard-to-do>

Arthur Miller takes a humorous look at a gruesome process in *Get It Right: Privatize Executions*:

- <http://www.davidglensmith.com/lonestar/1301/PDFs/miller.pdf>
- <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/05/08/opinion/get-it-right-privatize-executions.html>
- [http://api.ning.com/files/-3Hij651xE-rSj4Q4WeH-\\*f0NQJGyoXgI8AR\\*3Rat-AyxVuVAgEE/bfbuyGbTu9gpi7z3gT4jqd52W3fBsDRfFGgEgLxB5wO4/GetItRight.PrivatizeExecutionsArthurMiller.pdf](http://api.ning.com/files/-3Hij651xE-rSj4Q4WeH-*f0NQJGyoXgI8AR*3Rat-AyxVuVAgEE/bfbuyGbTu9gpi7z3gT4jqd52W3fBsDRfFGgEgLxB5wO4/GetItRight.PrivatizeExecutionsArthurMiller.pdf)

## 15.7 Definition Essay

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE

1. Read an example of the definition rhetorical mode.

### Defining Good Students Means More Than Just Grades

Many people define good students as those who receive the best grades. While it is true that good students often earn high grades, I contend that grades are just one aspect of how we define a good student. In fact, even poor students can earn high grades sometimes, so grades are not the best indicator of a student's quality. Rather, a good student pursues scholarship, actively participates in class, and maintains a positive, professional relationship with instructors and peers.

Good students have a passion for learning that drives them to fully understand class material rather than just worry about what grades they receive in the course. Good students are actively engaged in scholarship, which means they enjoy reading and learning about their subject matter not just because readings and assignments are required. Of course, good students will complete their homework and all assignments, and they may even continue to perform research and learn more on the subject after the course ends. In some cases, good students will pursue a subject that interests them but might not be one of their strongest academic areas, so they will not earn the highest grades. Pushing oneself to learn and try new things can be difficult, but good students will challenge themselves rather than remain at their educational comfort level for the sake of a high grade. The pursuit of scholarship and education rather than concern over grades is the hallmark of a good student.

Class participation and behavior are another aspect of the definition of a good student. Simply attending class is not enough; good students arrive punctually because they understand that tardiness disrupts the class and disrespects the professors. They might occasionally arrive a few minutes early to ask the professor questions about class materials or mentally prepare for the day's work. Good students consistently pay attention during class discussions and take notes in lectures rather than engage in off-task behaviors, such as checking their cell phones or daydreaming. Excellent class participation requires a balance between speaking and listening, so good students will share their views when appropriate but also respect their classmates' views when they differ from their own. It is easy to mistake quantity of class discussion comments with quality, but good students know the difference and do not try to dominate the conversation. Sometimes class participation is counted toward a student's grade, but even without such clear rewards, good students understand how to perform and excel among their peers in the classroom.

Finally, good students maintain a positive and professional relationship with their professors. They respect their instructor's authority in the classroom as well as the instructor's privacy outside of the classroom. Prying into a professor's personal life is inappropriate, but attending office hours to discuss course material is an appropriate, effective way for students to demonstrate their dedication and interest in learning. Good students go to their professor's office during posted office hours or make an appointment if necessary. While instructors can be very busy, they are usually happy to offer guidance to students during office hours; after all, availability outside the classroom is a part of their job. Attending office hours can also help good students become memorable and stand out from the rest, particularly in lectures with hundreds enrolled. Maintaining positive, professional relationships with professors is especially important for those students who hope to attend graduate school and will need letters of recommendation in the future.

Although good grades often accompany good students, grades are not the only way to indicate what it means to be a good student. The definition of a good student means demonstrating such traits as engaging with course material, participating in class, and creating a professional relationship with professors. While every professor will have different criteria for earning an A in their course, most would agree on these characteristics for defining good students.

### Online Definition Essay Alternatives

Judy Brady provides a humorous look at responsibilities and relationships in *I Want a Wife*:

- <http://www.columbia.edu/~sss31/rainbow/wife.html>
- [http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/everythingsanargument4e/content/cat\\_020/Brady\\_I\\_Want\\_a\\_Wife.pdf](http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/everythingsanargument4e/content/cat_020/Brady_I_Want_a_Wife.pdf)

Gayle Rosenwald Smith shares her dislike of the name for a sleeveless T-shirt, *The Wife-Beater*:

- <http://www.usd305.com/212720101692451310/lib/212720101692451310/20100429123836146.pdf>

Philip Levine defines *What Work Is*:

- [http://www.ibiblio.org/ipa/poems/levine/what\\_work\\_is.php](http://www.ibiblio.org/ipa/poems/levine/what_work_is.php)
- <http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/what-work-is>

## 15.8 Compare-and-Contrast Essay

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE

1. Read an example of the compare-and-contrast rhetorical mode.

### Comparing and Contrasting London and Washington, DC

Both Washington, DC, and London are capital cities of English-speaking countries, and yet they offer vastly different experiences to their residents and visitors. Comparing and contrasting the two cities based on their history, their culture, and their residents show how different and similar the two are.

Both cities are rich in world and national history, though they developed on very different time lines. London, for example, has a history that dates back over two thousand years. It was part of the Roman Empire and known by the similar name, Londinium. It was not only one of the northernmost points of the Roman Empire but also the epicenter of the British Empire where it held significant global influence from the early sixteenth century on through the early twentieth century. Washington, DC, on the other hand, has only formally existed since the late eighteenth century. Though Native Americans inhabited the land several thousand years earlier, and settlers inhabited the land as early as the sixteenth century, the city did not become the capital of the United States until the 1790s. From that point onward to today, however, Washington, DC, has increasingly maintained significant global influence. Even though both cities have different histories, they have both held, and continue to hold, significant social influence in the economic and cultural global spheres.

Both Washington, DC, and London offer a wide array of museums that harbor many of the world's most prized treasures. While Washington, DC, has the National Gallery of Art and several other Smithsonian galleries, London's art scene and galleries have a definite edge in this category. From the Tate Modern to the British National Gallery, London's art ranks among the world's best. This difference and advantage has much to do with London and Britain's historical depth compared to that of the United States. London has a much richer past than Washington, DC, and consequently has a lot more material to pull from when arranging its collections. Both cities have thriving theater districts, but again, London wins this comparison, too, both in quantity and quality of theater choices. With regard to other cultural places like restaurants, pubs, and bars, both cities are very comparable. Both have a wide selection of expensive, elegant restaurants as well as a similar amount of global and national chains. While London may be better known for its pubs and taste in beer, DC offers a different bar-going experience. With clubs and pubs that tend to stay open later than their British counterparts, the DC night life tend to be less reserved overall.

Both cities also share and differ in cultural diversity and cost of living. Both cities share a very expensive cost of living—both in terms of housing and shopping. A downtown one-bedroom apartment in DC can easily cost \$1,800 per month, and a similar “flat” in London may double that amount. These high costs create socioeconomic disparity among the residents. Although both cities’ residents are predominantly wealthy, both have a significantly large population of poor and homeless. Perhaps the most significant difference between the resident demographics is the racial makeup. Washington, DC, is a “minority majority” city, which means the majority of its citizens are races other than white. In 2009, according to the US Census, 55 percent of DC residents were classified as “Black or African American” and 35 percent of its residents were classified as “white.” London, by contrast, has very few minorities—in 2006, 70 percent of its population was “white,” while only 10 percent was “black.” The racial demographic differences between the cities is drastic.

Even though Washington, DC, and London are major capital cities of English-speaking countries in the Western world, they have many differences along with their similarities. They have vastly different histories, art cultures, and racial demographics, but they remain similar in their cost of living and socioeconomic disparity.

### Online Compare-and-Contrast Essay Alternatives

Ellen Laird compares and contrasts traditional and distance education in *I’m Your Teacher, Not Your Internet-Service Provider*:

- [http://eec.edc.org/cwis\\_docs/NEWS\\_ARTICLES\\_JOURNALS/Laird\\_Ellen.pdf](http://eec.edc.org/cwis_docs/NEWS_ARTICLES_JOURNALS/Laird_Ellen.pdf)
- [http://celt.cui.edu/celt/webct\\_for\\_instructors/Laird\\_Article.htm](http://celt.cui.edu/celt/webct_for_instructors/Laird_Article.htm)
- [http://depedia.com/mediawiki/index.php?title=I%27m\\_your\\_teacher%2C\\_not\\_your\\_Internet-Service\\_Provider](http://depedia.com/mediawiki/index.php?title=I%27m_your_teacher%2C_not_your_Internet-Service_Provider)

Deborah Tannen compares and contrasts conversation styles in *Sex, Lies and Conversation: Why Is It So Hard for Men and Women to Talk to Each Other?*

- <http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/tannend/sexlies.htm>

Alex Wright examines communication patterns, old and new, in *Friending, Ancient or Otherwise*:

- <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/02/weekinreview/02wright.html>

## 15.9 Cause-and-Effect Essay

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE

1. Read an example of the cause-and-effect rhetorical mode.

### Effects of Video Game Addiction

Video game addiction is a serious problem in many parts of the world today and deserves more attention. It is no secret that children and adults in many countries throughout the world, including Japan, China, and the United States, play video games every day. Most players are able to limit their usage in ways that do not interfere with their daily lives, but many others have developed an addiction to playing video games and suffer detrimental effects.

An addiction can be described in several ways, but generally speaking, addictions involve unhealthy attractions to substances or activities that ultimately disrupt the ability of a person to keep up with regular daily responsibilities. Video game addiction typically involves playing games uncontrollably for many hours at a time—some people will play only four hours at a time while others cannot stop for over twenty-four hours. Regardless of the severity of the addiction, many of the same effects will be experienced by all.

One common effect of video game addiction is isolation and withdrawal from social experiences. Video game players often hide in their homes or in Internet cafés for days at a time—only reemerging for the most pressing tasks and necessities. The effect of this isolation can lead to a breakdown of communication skills and often a loss in socialization. While it is true that many games, especially massive multiplayer online games, involve a very real form of e-based communication and coordination with others, and these virtual interactions often result in real communities that can be healthy for the players, these communities and forms of communication rarely translate to the types of valuable social interaction that humans need to maintain typical social functioning. As a result, the social networking in these online games often gives the users the impression that they are interacting socially, while their true social lives and personal relations may suffer.

Another unfortunate product of the isolation that often accompanies video game addiction is the disruption of the user's career. While many players manage to enjoy video games and still hold their jobs without problems, others experience challenges at their workplace. Some may only experience warnings or demerits as a result of poorer performance, or others may end up losing their jobs altogether. Playing video games for extended periods of time often involves sleep deprivation, and this tends to carry over to the workplace, reducing production and causing habitual tardiness.

Video game addiction may result in a decline in overall health and hygiene. Players who interact with video games for such significant amounts of time can go an entire day without eating and even longer without basic hygiene tasks, such as using the restroom or bathing. The effects of this behavior pose significant danger to their overall health.

The causes of video game addiction are complex and can vary greatly, but the effects have the potential to be severe. Playing video games can and should be a fun activity for all to enjoy. But just like everything else, the amount of time one spends playing video games needs to be balanced with personal and social responsibilities.

### Online Cause-and-Effective Essay Alternatives

Norman Cousins examines cause and effect in boxing in *Who Killed Benny Paret?*

- <http://ecmd.nju.edu.cn/UploadFile/6/2552/wb2427.doc>

Lawrence Otis Graham examines racism, and whether it has changed since the 1970s, in *The “Black Table” Is Still There*:

- <http://scremeens.googlepages.com/TheBlackTableessay.rtf>

Robin Tolmach Lakoff discusses the power of language to dehumanize in *From Ancient Greece to Iraq: The Power of Words in Wartime*:

- <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/18/science/essay-from-ancient-greece-to-iraq-the-power-of-words-in-wartime.html>

Alan Weisman examines the human impact on the planet and its effects in *Earth without People*:

- <http://discovermagazine.com/2005/feb/earth-without-people>

## 15.10 Persuasive Essay

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE

1. Read an example of the persuasive rhetorical mode.

### Universal Health Care Coverage for the United States

The United States is the only modernized Western nation that does not offer publicly funded health care to all its citizens; the costs of health care for the uninsured in the United States are prohibitive, and the practices of insurance companies are often more interested in profit margins than providing health care. These conditions are incompatible with US ideals and standards, and it is time for the US government to provide universal health care coverage for all its citizens. Like education, health care should be considered a fundamental right of all US citizens, not simply a privilege for the upper and middle classes.

One of the most common arguments against providing universal health care coverage (UHC) is that it will cost too much money. In other words, UHC would raise taxes too much. While providing health care for all US citizens would cost a lot of money for every tax-paying citizen, citizens need to examine exactly how much money it would cost, and more important, how much money is “too much” when it comes to opening up health care for all. Those who have health insurance already pay too much money, and those without coverage are charged unfathomable amounts. The cost of publicly funded health care versus the cost of current insurance premiums is unclear. In fact, some Americans, especially those in lower income brackets, could stand to pay less than their current premiums.

However, even if UHC would cost Americans a bit more money each year, we ought to reflect on what type of country we would like to live in, and what types of morals we represent if we are more willing to deny health care to others on the basis of saving a couple hundred dollars per year. In a system that privileges capitalism and rugged individualism, little room remains for compassion and love. It is time that Americans realize the amorality of US hospitals forced to turn away the sick and poor. UHC is a health care system that aligns more closely with the core values that so many Americans espouse and respect, and it is time to realize its potential.

Another common argument against UHC in the United States is that other comparable national health care systems, like that of England, France, or Canada, are bankrupt or rife with problems. UHC opponents claim that sick patients in these countries often wait in long lines or long wait lists for basic health care. Opponents also commonly accuse these systems of being unable to pay for themselves, racking up huge deficits year after year. A fair amount of

truth lies in these claims, but Americans must remember to put those problems in context with the problems of the current US system as well. It is true that people often wait to see a doctor in countries with UHC, but we in the United States wait as well, and we often schedule appointments weeks in advance, only to have onerous waits in the doctor's "waiting rooms."

Critical and urgent care abroad is always treated urgently, much the same as it is treated in the United States. The main difference there, however, is cost. Even health insurance policy holders are not safe from the costs of health care in the United States. Each day an American acquires a form of cancer, and the only effective treatment might be considered "experimental" by an insurance company and thus is not covered. Without medical coverage, the patient must pay for the treatment out of pocket. But these costs may be so prohibitive that the patient will either opt for a less effective, but covered, treatment; opt for no treatment at all; or attempt to pay the costs of treatment and experience unimaginable financial consequences. Medical bills in these cases can easily rise into the hundreds of thousands of dollars, which is enough to force even wealthy families out of their homes and into perpetual debt. Even though each American could someday face this unfortunate situation, many still choose to take the financial risk. Instead of gambling with health and financial welfare, US citizens should press their representatives to set up UHC, where their coverage will be guaranteed and affordable.

Despite the opponents' claims against UHC, a universal system will save lives and encourage the health of all Americans. Why has public education been so easily accepted, but not public health care? It is time for Americans to start thinking socially about health in the same ways they think about education and police services: as rights of US citizens.

### Online Persuasive Essay Alternatives

Martin Luther King Jr. writes persuasively about civil disobedience in *Letter from Birmingham Jail*:

- <http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/frequentdocs/birmingham.pdf>
- [http://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/documents/Letter\\_Birmingham\\_Jail.pdf](http://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/documents/Letter_Birmingham_Jail.pdf)
- <http://www.oak-tree.us/stuff/King-Birmingham.pdf>

Michael Levin argues *The Case for Torture*:

- <http://people.brandeis.edu/~teuber/torture.html>
- <http://www.canyons.edu/departments/philosophy/levin.html>

Alan Dershowitz argues *The Case for Torture Warrants*:

- <http://www.alandershowitz.com/publications/docs/torturewarrants.html>

Alisa Solomon argues *The Case against Torture*:

- <http://www.villagevoice.com/2001-11-27/news/the-case-against-torture/1>