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PARAPHRASING: THE AUTHOR'S THOUGHTS IN YOUR WORDS

In order to respond to others, we need to understand their thoughts, but we often read inaccurately and incompletely. Writing a careful paraphrase—that is, putting the meaning of the text into new words—makes you pay close attention to the author's ideas and thereby improves your level of understanding. In paraphrasing, you constantly keep the meaning of the original in mind but express the same ideas in a different way. Two tricks that will help you find new ways to express the author's meaning are substituting synonyms and rearranging sentence structure. Paraphrasing will help you to communicate the meaning of a difficult passage. When you go on to make your own argument, it will allow you to refer to another writer's thoughts while you maintain control of the focus and tone of the argument.

Getting the Message

How often has someone not understood what you were saying? If you are like most of us, it happens many times a day. Sometimes people misunderstand us entirely; sometimes they don't even seem to hear us, although a few minutes later they may give us back our own words, claiming the words are their own. (Such situations provide standard jokes for television situation comedies.) More often people understand only part of what we say; they get the general idea but miss the fine points or particular thrust of our comments. People who listen closely and understand what other people say make more relevant responses. The more they understand another person's comments in detail, the more they can respond directly to the problems and issues on the other person's mind. Moreover, hearing something new may inspire new ideas in such careful listeners. The closer they get to what the speaker is saying, the more a real interchange of ideas takes place. And new thoughts are more likely to arise on *both* sides. It is very hard to listen carefully to what another person is saying. People, including ourselves, are more likely to hear what they want to hear. We like to hear what we already know. Curiosity and desire for knowledge are strong human motives, but we also have an opposite tendency to "stick by our guns" and defend the viewpoints we have already come to believe in. We resist hearing—llet alone adopting—any new viewpoint or explanation. These conserving instincts underlie our positive sense of integrity (as in *integer,* "maintaining wholeness"). But they also work to spare us the effort of dealing with too many challenges. If we know or care little about a subject, hearing something new about it will not disturb us, but if we have made up our minds and hearts, new ideas are a serious threat to our peace of mind. C. Northcote Parkinson, the economist and observer of bureaucracies, has pointed out that the less important a decision is, the more time is devoted to discussing it.[*] "Two hours will be spent on the new color scheme of the executive conference room—but only five minutes on the opening of a new factory. On the important issues, almost everyone either has an unshakable opinion already or shrinks from the effort and responsibility involved in making a serious decision, so they get the anxiety-arousing items on the agenda out of the way as quickly as possible.

Read What Is Written

We have many tricks to avoid getting the message when we read. To avoid the challenge of confronting another writer's thoughts, we may simply never pick up books that will give us a hard time (think of that textbook you just dread opening). If we do get as far as turning to page 1 and looking at the words, there are many ways we can appear to read without really reading.

Immediately assuming that a book contains nothing worthwhile allows us to focus on its faults and not think about what the author is trying to tell us. If we spend the whole time arguing with what a book says, we may not even get a clear impression of its main message and the evidence the writer marshals. Disturbing, challenging books are especially likely to make us react negatively at many intermediate points. Petty faultfinding is a very effective way to avoid considering whether a book might indeed have something to tell us.

If we aren't quarreling with a challenging book, we may be assuming it says what we want it to say—and not what it actually does say. We may latch on to phrases that sound similar to ideas we subscribe to and then mindlessly skim those parts that sound unfamiliar or too complex. Just

[*] C. Northcote Parkinson, *Parkinson's Law and Order Studies in Administration* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1957), p. 32.

because we interpret a few words as similar to our own thoughts doesn't mean that the writer had anything like our thoughts in mind. We may even ignore a few key qualifying words, such as *not generally* or *rarely,* to make the book read the way we want it to! Even if we avoid such extreme distortion, we still may smooth over more subtle differences. Given the variety of human thought, we cannot assume that any writer shares our exact perspective on all points.

Right Word, Wrong Meaning

We may even read a word, know the meaning of it, and still misunderstand the meaning the author intended. Words, particularly abstractions, can have many varied meanings to different people. To a debater a *point of view* is an opinion, to an art critic it is the angle from which we view a piece of sculpture, and to a novelist it is the character through whose eyes we see the story. Certain loosely defined words like *truth, objectivity,* and *freedom* have been under dispute for centuries, and each user is likely to have a particular meaning in mind. If we want to understand a particular writer, we have to understand the word according to that writer's definition.

Other words gain popularity so rapidly that they are used to describe many different ideas before anyone meaning gets established. Although many people approve of the concept of *diversity,* the question of what it means in a particular situation may generate arguments. In cultural studies, although many people are willing to define these times as *post-modern,* they may not agree as to what that description conveys. And you can hardly know exactly what someone means by *feminist* unless you ask for details about the attitudes and beliefs of the person being described.

Even if a word is used with its most common meaning, we may misunderstand it unless we remain sensitive to the *context.* Everyone knows what the animal called a *horse* is, but that word still holds very different meanings to a jockey, a better, and a ten-year-old child. In order to understand how and why any writer is using any word, we have to recognize the writer's way of thinking and his or her special interests. Although two authors may be concerned with military force, they may be concerned with separate issues and may make different kinds of connections and arguments. In reading an author interested In the present-day uses of military force in international politics, we must be receptive to an entirely different kind of reasoning than we would find in a writer interested in the social structure of a militarized country. Each of the works might shed light on the other, but they are operating in two separate spheres.

Review for an Overview

Once a reader is receptive to the language and the spirit of a written work, the reader still has to be willing to see how the parts fit together into a coherent whole. Not every book does fit together well: the argument may ramble, or the later chapters may contradict the earlier. Sometimes a book coheres on one level, clearly presenting the chronological narrative of, say, Thomas Jefferson's life, but lacks coherence on another, not explaining the development of his character. Until we have made a serious attempt to draw the parts together in our own minds, we will have no basis for evaluating a book's overall significance. Fortunately, most books are more than collections of loosely connected statements, and we must look for the significant connections.

The remainder of this chapter discusses paraphrasing, a task that requires a close reading of a given passage and a careful rewriting. We might think of paraphrasing as a trick that forces us to get the message when we read. In recasting another writer's thoughts into our own words, we must pay close attention to the content of statements and the precise meanings of words. The

task of paraphrase keeps our attention on the page. In later chapters we will return to expressing personal thoughts and reactions-and to contributing to the conversation.

Rethinking, Restating

Every school day at almost every level, many students are asked to restate in their own words information they encounter in books, lectures, and films. Teachers assign this kind of loose paraphrase to see whether students have remembered and understood the course material. For such purposes, a student needs only to reproduce a few key concepts without making gross errors. True paraphrase, however, is part of a larger process of understanding and responding to a specific written passage. Before you can use or argue with anyone else's ideas, you must understand these ideas accurately. Careful paraphrase requires close attention to every nuance of meaning so that, when you later come to refer to these ideas or argue against them, you will know exactly what you are working with. Paraphrase can serve as a form of note taking, allowing you to preserve the writer's exact meaning in those terms that you understand best. Even more important, paraphrase can serve as a way of referring to writers' thoughts in your own original essays so that you can build on and answer others' ideas even while you are advancing your own.

To *paraphrase* is to restate a passage precisely in your own words and phrasing in order to clarify the meaning. The task at first does not appear difficult. However, words that are similar are not always interchangeable, and the meanings of words shift subtly with their context and their use. Further, sentences put words into exact relationships. Creating an accurate paraphrase forces you to consider both the precise use of words and the sense of the entire statement. In considering the word-by-word meaning of a text and in searching for possible substitutions, the paraphraser must literally come to terms with what has been written. Turning your understanding of a text into written language banishes the looseness of understanding that often remains hidden in the privacy of your silent reading.

In writing paraphrases you must attend to two points: the meaning of words as they are used in context and the relationship between words. In both you must reach for more than loose approximation. You must include all that was in the original, without adding anything new and without misrepresenting the original content.

Two Techniques

Two techniques will help you gain a precise understanding of the original: substituting synonyms and rearranging the sentence structure. To paraphrase the opening sentence of the Gettysburg Address, for example, you might replace the original words with words of the same meaning. The original reads as follows:

> Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

First, replacing synonyms may lead to this initial draft of the paraphrase.

> Eighty-seven years before today, our political and spiritual ancestors created in North America a country that did not exist before, thought of in freedom and devoted to establishing the principle that all people are born with the same rights.

Second, restructuring the sentence might lead to a more total paraphrase.

> Our political and spiritual ancestors were thinking of how to make freedom a reality when, eighty-seven years before today, they created a country that did not previously exist. Their creation was devoted to establishing the principle that all people are born with the same rights.

Different Words . . .

Let's look a bit more closely at the two strategies-used here. Word substitution allows you to explore the meanings of individual words and see how they are used exactly in the passage. Most words have a number of meanings, only one of which is usually appropriate to the passage in question. For example, the word *fathers* has a range of meanings from "male parents" to "a group of early writers in the Christian Church." Among those meanings is that of people who start something, particularly founders of a line of descent, tribe, or community. It is in this sense that President Lincoln is using the word. Certainly he is not referring to Roman senators or to Roman Catholic priests. Given the eighty-seven-year period he mentions, we know the waves of immigration to the United States between 1776 and 1863 rule out Lincoln's use of *fathers* to mean the male parents, grandfathers, and great-grandfathers of those present.

The specific use of a word in a passage often highlights a particular aspect of the word, so even if you find a generally correct synonym, you may need to explore further to bring out how the word is being used in context. In this sentence, even though President Lincoln uses the words *fathers* and *men*, following the practice of his time to refer to humankind in all-male terms, he may not consciously mean to emphasize gender. Nor does Lincoln convey any particular concern with direct genetic lineage. His interest lies more with the creation of a political and spiritual community whose membership does not depend on who one's actual parents were, where they came from, or what they did. Therefore, the paraphrase uses the gender-free word *ancestors,* and then qualifies it with the words *political and spiritual.* The concept of creation, inherent in the word *fathers,* is supported by several words in the original, including *brought forth* and *new.* This idea is reinforced by the paraphrases chosen for these words, "created" and "that did not exist before."

In your search for appropriate synonyms for substitution, reference books such as a dictionary and thesaurus (dictionary of synonyms) will be of some use. A dictionary can help you find the general meanings of unfamiliar words or remind you of the range of possible meanings for more familiar words. But you must check the meanings against the context of the passage. You must ask how any definition of a word would fit in with the overall text meaning. Similarly a thesaurus may remind you of alternative words, but then you must select intelligently and appropriately among them.

For example, *Webster's Dictionary of Synonyms* includes among the synonyms for *conceive* the words *think, imagine, fancy,* and *realize.* Although in some contexts *conceive* does mean the same as *imagine* (as in the question "How could you conceive I would do that?"), in the opening of the Gettysburg Address, *imagine* is inappropriate. *Imagine* implies something that has nothing to do with reality, but Lincoln was using *conceive* to suggest a thought that leads to a reality, almost as though the idea gives birth to the reality, as a child is conceived in its mother's womb. Similarly, *fancy* is not a serious enough thought and *realize* is too sudden, too unplanned. The only word from that list that fits appropriately is *think,* a form of which was used in my paraphrase.

Sometimes the dictionary or thesaurus may not offer adequate substitutions, but as you think through why the listed alternatives are not appropriate for the context, you may come up with a better word or phrase of your own. Use these reference books as resources to help you

think about meanings, but not as sources of absolute word equivalents. Avoid suffering the fate of one poor student who, looking for a synonym for *pickle,* wound up describing a sandwich served with a predicament. Your main task in paraphrasing must always be to reconstruct the meaning of the original as sharply as you can.

Different Sentences . . .

When you start to move the structure of a sentence around, you must pay attention to how all the parts of the original sentence fit together. In particular, you must notice the central core of meaning of the sentence and how all the other parts of the sentence relate to that core. An understanding of how all the parts of a sentence are arranged around a core concept will help you bring out that core of meaning as you rewrite the sentence. Without that control of core meaning, a rewritten sentence can easily turn into gibberish.

The opening sentence of the Gettysburg Address is built on the core sentence "Fathers brought forth a nation." Additional phrases identify the time ("fourscore and seven years ago") and place ("on this continent") of this event. The remainder of the sentence itemizes two ideas behind the nation ("conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal"). The emphasis in the sentence is on the creation of the nation. Concepts behind nationhood are presented only as elaboration.

You may notice that the paraphrase, however, puts great emphasis on the ideas behind the creation of the United States. I made this choice because the Gettysburg Address as a whole emphasizes those ideas as the important issue at stake in the Civil War. The first paraphrase sentence presents the creation of a nation as an attempt to act on the concept of freedom, rather than freedom itself as an afterthought to nationhood. By breaking the original sentence into two short ones, with each idea the focus of its own sentence, the paraphrase can give greater weight to the two concepts behind nationhood. The paraphrase emphasizes that the nation created is the living reality of those two ideas.

I believe this adjustment in the relation of parts of the sentence does reflect the meaning of the overall document. Every time you rearrange a sentence, however, you shake up the relations of its parts, and you must ask yourself whether those new relations are warranted.

. . . But the Same Meaning

After substituting words and rearranging a sentence, you must ask yourself whether your paraphrase means the same as the original. For example, the phrase "created equal" might be paraphrased *mode the some,* but *made the same* suggests that people look and act exactly alike—not Lincoln's meaning. The context of the phrase is political, and President Lincoln refers to political equality, so *born with the some rights* is a more accurate paraphrase.

Any paraphrase that does not consider the total meaning of the original can easily become as absurd as the distortions made by a student and a teacher who were discussing the meaning of a famous line from Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice.* The line is "The quality of mercy is not strained," which may be accurately paraphrased as "compassionate forgiveness is given freely and easily." But the student tried substituting words without considering context; she wanted to know whether *strained* in the passage meant "strained as in rubber band or strained as in soup." The teacher, looking only at the sentence structure, answered, "Well, since it's *not* strained anyway, I don't see that it matters."

Substituting words and moving sentence parts around do not guarantee accurate paraphrase; you must always check the meaning of the paraphrase against the meaning of the original.

Because paraphrasing makes you grapple so closely with the meaning of a text, as you reframe language you become more aware of how much control over meaning you actually have. As you look at a text word by word and phrase by phrase, you may notice where you are confused by meaning or have only a general idea of overall meaning. As you start to examine alternative phrasings, you will have to ask yourself questions about precise meanings that you have never had to ask before. As you examine the structure of sentences, you will need to reconstruct the basic relations of parts of the text, rather than just read the text as a string of loosely associated sentences about a general topic.

Start noticing where you get stuck when you work on a paraphrase. The places where you have difficulty rephrasing the wording of the original or difficulty assembling your paraphrase may be exactly the passages where you have not yet gained full control of meaning. By discussing those difficult sections with teachers and classmates, you will be increasing the subtlety and accuracy of your reading understanding.

Please note: a paraphrase always represents someone else's ideas even though the words are your own. Always identify the original source you are paraphrasing. Sufficient credit in a passing comment might rest in a simple phrase such as *to paraphrase Lincoln.* Chapter 11 presents more formal documentation methods. Where paraphrase is given as a separate assignment, identify in a heading or a tag line the source you are paraphrasing.

Steps in Writing a Paraphrase

1. Read the original carefully.
2. Substitute words and rearrange sentences, asking yourself questions about precise meanings.
3. Check the meaning of your paraphrase against the original.
4. Identify the source you are paraphrasing.

EXERCISES

1. In the passage that follows from *On Civil Disobedience* by Henry David Thoreau, identify possible substitutes for the underlined words. Be prepared to discuss the appropriateness of your substitutions in relation to the overall meaning of the selection.

> I heartily accept the motto,--"That government is best which governs least;" and I should like to see it acted up to more rapidly and systematically. Carried out, it finally amounts to this, which also I believe,--"That government is best which governs not at all;" and when men are prepared for it, that will be the kind of government which they will have. Government is at best but an expedient; but most governments are usually, and all governments are sometimes, inexpedient ....
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> This American government,--what is it but a tradition, though a recent one, endeavoring to transmit itself unimpaired to posterity, but each instant losing some of its integrity? It has not the vitality and force of a single living man; for a single man can bend it to his will. It is a sort of wooden gun to the people themselves. But it is not the less necessary for this; for the people must have some complicated machinery or other, and hear its din, to satisfy that idea of government which they have. Governments show thus how successfully men can be imposed on, even impose on themselves, for their own advantage. It is excellent, we must all allow. Yet this government never of itself furthered any enterprise, but by the alacrity with which it got out of its way. *It* does not keep the country free. *It* does not settle the West. *It* does not educate. The character inherent in the American people has done all

> that has been accomplished; and it would have done somewhat more, if the government had not sometimes got in its way. For government is an expedient by which men would fain succeed in letting one another alone; and, as has been said, when it is most expedient, the governed are most let alone by it. Trade and commerce, if they were not made of India-rubber, would never manage to bounce over the obstacles which legislators are continually putting in their way; and, if one were to judge these men wholly by the effects of their actions and not partly by their intentions, they would deserve to be classed and punished with those mischievous persons who put obstructions on the railroads.

2. In each of the following sentences from *On Liberty* by John Stuart Mill, identify the core meaning. Be prepared to discuss the relation of the other parts of the sentence to this core. Then rearrange sentence structure to maintain the primary relations and emphases among the sentence parts. You may break longer sentences down into several short ones.

a. Liberty consists in doing what one desires.
b. The liberty of the individual must be thus far limited; he must not make himself a nuisance to other people.
c. The worth of a State, in the long run, is the worth of the individuals composing it.
d. We can never be sure that the opinion we are endeavouring to stifle is a false opinion; and if we were sure, stifling it would be an evil still.
e. If all mankind minus one, were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind.
f. A state which dwarfs its men, in order that they may be docile instruments in its hands even for beneficial purposes, will find that with small men no great thing can really be accomplished.

3. Paraphrase each of these sentences from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s 1963 speech, "I Have a Dream."

a. I say to you today, my friends, even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream.
b. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.
c. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."
d. I have a dream that one day, on the red hills of Georgia, sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.
e. I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.
f. I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.

4. Identify and discuss in class the meaning of the word and sentence-structure choices in the complete text of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address below. Then discuss the effect of various word substitutions and sentence rearrangements you might use in a paraphrase. After discussing these issues, break into small groups of three or four students, each group to work together to write a paraphrase of the entire speech.

Address at the Dedication of the
Gettysburg National Cemetery

> Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.
>
> Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.
>
> But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us-that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

PARAPHRASE: SELECTION 1

The best way to see how creating paraphrases can lead to more precise understanding is to do a few and explore the problems that arise. You will get the most from the following examples of paraphrase if you write your own paraphrases of the passages given before reading the sample paraphrases. When comparing your paraphrases to the sample paraphrases, remember that there is no absolute right and wrong—only variations on how close the paraphrase comes to the original in meaning.

The first passage to paraphrase discusses how democracy influences the character and lives of its citizens. It was written by the educational philosopher John Dewey, who in the early part of this century led the progressive education movement.

Democracy as a Way of Life

> Democracy is much broader than a special political form, a method of conducting government, of making laws and carrying on governmental administration by means of popular suffrage and elected officers. It is that, of course. But it is something broader and deeper than that. The political and governmental phase of democracy is a means, the best means so far found, for realizing ends that lie in the wide domain of human relationships and the development of human personality. It is, as we often say, though perhaps without appreciating all that is involved in the saying, a way of life, social and individual. The keynote of democracy as a way of life may be expressed, it seems to me, as the necessity for the participation of every mature human being in formation of the values that regulate the living of men together: which is necessary from the standpoint of both the general social welfare and the full development of human beings as individuals,

This passage brings together a number of ideas that surround our lives as Americans but that we may not have put together in just this way. In examining how Dewey puts these ideas together we can start to understand how we as individuals have grown to meet the opportunities and responsibilities of our form of government. The paraphrase should help bring out the connections that Dewey finds.

Sample Paraphrase

"Democracy as a Way of Life," by John Dewey

> Rule by and through the people does more than provide a particular way of organizing people's interests into a government, of establishing and acting on the rules through the vote of all adult citizens and individuals chosen by the voters. Although democracy does these things, it also has a wider-ranging and more profound effect on human life. The democratic processes of negotiation of power and administration of society's rules are the most effective ways we know of achieving the goals that concern our social lives and our individual characters. We often say that democracy is a way of life, but this is a more meaningful saying than we usually realize. Democracy requires that every adult actively contribute to the articulation and selection of those principles and desires that determine how we shall live in a shared society. This active contribution is required for improving our common way of life and for enabling each of us to fully develop as mature individuals. This requirement I believe is the heart of democracy.

COMMENTS ON THE PARAPHRASE

Although words are changed and clauses are rearranged, none of the original meaning is left out and nothing is added. Several of the crucial terms, however, I have extensively paraphrased to clarify their meaning as used in this passage. Key terms like *democracy, political, government, suffrage, elected officers,* and *participation* are rephrased, often in several ways in different contexts, to bring out the aspect being discussed at each point. The term *political* is, for example, replaced by the phrases *organizing people's interests* and *negotiation of power.* The political process encompasses both of these and more, but these aspects seem most relevant for the places they are used. I treat the term *democracy* slightly differently, because it is the central concept of the discussion. After a first paraphrase, which brings out the active participation of citizens ("rule by and through the people"), I revert to using the term *democracy* directly, even substituting the term for Dewey's pronoun references *(it).*

I also reorganize many of the sentences. Sometimes I do this to complete thoughts that Dewey holds in suspension for several sentences (see Dewey's second through fourth sentences: "It is that, of course. But it is something broader ..."; I compress all this in one sentence: "Although democracy does these things, it also has a wider-ranging and more profound effect on human life."). Other sentences I make more active to emphasize that Dewey is discussing a process of social participation and individual growth (see Dewey's opening sentence, "Democracy is much broader than a special political form, a method of conducting government, of making laws and carrying on governmental administration by means of popular suffrage and elected officers," and my paraphrase, where I change the emphasis from what democracy *is* to what it *does:* "Rule by and through the people does more than provide a particular way ...").

Through all the changes, my main goal was to identify the core assertion of each statement. The last sentence of the original I felt contained two important assertions, the first about the role of individual participation in fundamental social choices and the second about the effect of that participation. So I split that sentence into two sentences, each asserting one of these core meanings ("Democracy requires that every adult.... This active contribution ...").

WRITING ASSIGNMENT

Paraphrase either passage A or passage B. Passage A is the continuation of John Dewey's discussion of democracy as a way of life. Passage B, by John Muir, the founder and first president of the Sierra Club, begins a discussion of the need to preserve the wilderness.

A.

Democracy as a Way of Life
(continued)

Universal suffrage, recurring elections, responsibility of those who are in political power to the voters, and the other factors of democratic government are means that have been found expedient for realizing democracy as the truly human way of living. They are not a final end and a final value. They are to be judged on the basis of their contribution to end. It is a form of idolatry to erect means into the end which they serve. Democratic political forms are simply the best means that human wit has devised up to a special time in history. But they rest back upon the idea that no man or limited set of men is wise enough or good enough to rule others without their consent; the positive meaning of this statement is that all those who are affected by social institutions must have a share in producing and managing them. The two facts that each one is influenced in what he does and enjoys and in what he becomes by the institutions under which he lives, and that therefore he shall have, in a democracy, a voice in shaping them, are the passive and active sides of the same fact.

The development of political democracy came about through substitution of the method of mutual consultation and voluntary agreement for the method of subordination of the many to the few enforced from above. Social arrangements which involve fixed subordination are maintained by coercion. The coercion need not be physical. There have existed, for short periods, benevolent despotisms. But coercion of some sort there has been; perhaps economic, certainly psychological and moral. The very fact of exclusion from participation is a subtle form of suppression. It gives individuals no opportunity to reflect and decide upon what is good for them. Others who are supposed to be wiser and who in any case have more power decide the question for them and also decide the methods and means by which subjects may arrive at the enjoyment of what is good for them. This form of coercion and suppression is more subtle and more effective than are overt intimidation and restraint. When it is habitual and embodied in social institutions, it seems the normal and natural state of affairs. The mass usually become unaware that they have a claim to a development of their own powers. Their experience is so restricted that they are not conscious of restriction. It is part of the democratic conception that they as individuals are not the only sufferers, but that the whole social body is deprived of the potential resources that should be at its service. The individuals of the submerged mass may not be very wise. But there is one thing they are wiser about than anybody else can be, and that is where the shoe pinches, the troubles they suffer from.

B.

The tendency nowadays to wander in wildernesses is delightful to see. Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that wildness is a necessity; and that mountain parks and reservations are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers, but as fountains of life. Awakening from the stupefying effects of the vice of over-industry and the deadly apathy of luxury, they are trying as best they can to mix and enrich their own little on goings with those of Nature, and to get rid of rust and disease. Briskly venturing and roaming, some are washing off sins and cobweb cares of the devil's spinning in all-day storms on mountains; sauntering in rosiny pinewoods or in gentian meadows, brushing through chaparral, bending down and parting sweet, flowery sprays; tracing rivers to their sources, getting in touch with the nerves of Mother Earth; jumping from rock to rock, feeling the life of them, learning the songs of them, panting in whole-souled exercise, and rejoicing in deep, long-drawn breaths of pure wildness. This is fine and natural and full of promise. So also is the growing interest in the care and preservation of forests and wild places in general, and in the half wild parks and gardens of towns. Even the scenery habit in its most artificial forms, mixed with spectacles, silliness, and kodaks; its devotees arrayed more gorgeously than scarlet tanagers, frightening the wild game with red umbrellas,—even this is encouraging, and may well be regarded as a hopeful sign of the times.

All the Western mountains are still rich in wildness, and by means of good roads are being brought nearer civilization every year. To the sane and free it will hardly seem necessary to cross the continent in search of wild beauty, however easy the way, for they

find it in abundance wherever they chance to be. Like Thoreau they see forests in orchards and patches of huckleberry brush, and oceans in ponds and drops of dew. Few in these hot, dim, strenuous times are quite sane or free; choked with care like clocks full of dust, laboriously doing so much good and making so much money, For so little,-they are no longer good for themselves.

PARAPHRASE: SELECTION 2

The next excerpt for paraphrase appears in Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America.* De Tocqueville, a French aristocrat, visited the United States in 1831 and commented on what he saw. This passage considers an unpleasant aspect of democracy's influence on personal character, and it may challenge you to wonder if democracy is an entirely good thing. You may also wonder whether democracy has aroused envy and disappointed ambition in yourself or any other people you know.

In making us ask questions that might put our way of life and our individual characters in a bad light, de Tocqueville delivers a message we may not want to hear. After reflecting and carefully considering his argument, we may judge him wrong. But to judge his remarks fairly, we must first attend carefully to what he says; only then can we see whether his claims fit our experience and knowledge.

Of the Effect of Democracy on Character

It cannot be denied that democratic institutions strongly tend to promote the feeling of envy in the human heart; not so much because they afford to everyone the means of rising to the same level with others as because those means perpetually disappoint the persons who employ them. Democratic institutions awaken and foster a passion for equality which they can never entirely satisfy. This complete equality eludes the grasp of the people at the very moment when they think they have grasped it, and "flies" as Pascal says, "with an eternal flight"; the people are excited in the pursuit of an advantage, which is more precious because it is not sufficiently remote to be unknown or sufficiently near to be enjoyed. The lower orders are agitated by the chance of success, they are irritated by its uncertainty; and they pass from the enthusiasm of pursuit to the exhaustion of ill success, and lastly to the acrimony of disappointment. Whatever transcends their own limitations appears to be an obstacle to their desires and there is no superiority, however legitimate it may be, which is not irksome in their Sight.

Sample Paraphrase

DeTocqueville's "Of the Effect of Democracy on Character"

The organized structures through which democratic societies rule themselves without doubt lead people to resent those they feel are better off than themselves. The cause of this envy is not the opportunity all have to improve their condition and to attempt to be as prosperous as anyone else. The cause is rather that these opportunities are never as fully satisfying as they appear to be. A way of life structured around political equality makes people desire an equal share of all life's benefits, but democratic government cannot make all people happy or give everyone full equality. This desire to share in all life's benefits is particularly frustrating and unsatisfying because it seems to escape those who seek it just when they feel it is in their reach. Democracy tantalizes people because life's benefits are near enough to see yet slightly beyond their grasp. Especially among people not from the upper classes of society, thoughts, energies, and emotions are aroused by this near goal, but anxiety about whether the goal will be reached creates an unpleasant uneasiness. The excitement and involvement of the chase turns into the tiredness of not having achieved

> the goal, and finally into the bitterness and faultfinding of failure. Those who have failed then view those people who have escaped the limitations which have burdened them as the reasons for their own failure. They view those who have succeeded as precisely those who have stood in their way. All advantages others may have, no matter how deserved or properly earned, are deeply irritating to them.

COMMENTS ON THE PARAPHRASE

Since this passage discusses the causes of emotions, the biggest challenge was to describe precisely the emotions involved, specifically, I needed to be able to characterize envy. To find the paraphrase for *envy* as resentment against those one feels are better off than oneself, I had to think through the kinds of perceived inequalities that taunt one's desires.

Similarly, in trying to find a paraphrase for *equality* that would fit the context of this discussion, I realized that de Tocqueville was using the term in several senses. One sense was political equality, which supposed people's feeling of equality in the second sense, the imagined hope of sharing equally in all life's benefits. A third sense—an equal opportunity to compete—activated people's energies and emotions into the struggle. This was frustrated, however, by the impossibility of equality in the fourth sense, the actual sharing of all life's benefits. Only when I sorted out all these different senses of equality was I able to paraphrase the passage clearly.

Because de Tocqueville often relies on long sentences with complex chains of reasoning, I generally tried to break the sentences down into smaller units to isolate the core assertions and to handle the connections of ideas one at a time.

As I was writing the paraphrase, I became aware of one underlying theme which led me to question de Tocqueville's assumptions. He seems to think that difficulties arise from the people who he says are not fully successful. At first I thought he simply meant that since no one could succeed fully and since there was always someone who had something we had not yet achieved, all of us would suffer the same elusiveness of achievement and the same envy. But as I read on he seemed to be talking about a group of people who were unfamiliar with the pleasures of success. This started to become clear when he talked about how excitement turns into disappointment. His assumption became fully explicit with the phrase *the lower orders*: he was clearly separating the successful superiors from the failing inferiors. The inferior people would envy the better people, not giving them adequate respect or, even more importantly, responsibility for the government. As he goes on to say in the continuation (which is reprinted in the next exercise), this means that people in a democracy do not support the best people for public office. I then remembered that de Tocqueville was a French aristocrat who felt that there were indeed some people—aristocrats—who were naturally more fit to lead a country. He must have especially felt that sting of envy and exclusion in the wake of the French Revolution, when the aristocracy was systematically removed from positions of social responsibility.

If we question de Tocqueville's assumptions that some people are naturally superior, and moreover that they are precisely the same people who have the most social benefits, we may wind up rejecting his whole analysis of democratic envy and its consequences. Instead we may wonder at the social divisions which create obstacles for striving individuals. We may also wonder whether envy of privileged classes and hostility toward their privileges may not be a warranted and socially useful emotion leading to social reform. On the other hand, envy does have many negative associations and seems to sap initiative, because one's desire is channeled into feeling against others rather than into motivation for one's own struggle. Indeed, de Tocqueville makes

us wonder whether envy must be a necessary and unpleasant part of democracy, since each person sets his or her sights on goals already obtained by others.

The more deeply I looked at de Tocqueville's precise meaning and reasoning, the more deeply I could react to it. Only by looking closely at the passage to paraphrase it could I observe those details and shades of meaning that led to my analysis and reaction. Similarly, as you learn to read more deeply through paraphrase, the comments in your journal (see Chapter 2) should be gaining subtlety and relevance to the texts you are discussing. By making you confront another person's argument fully, paraphrase leads to a carefully thought-out answer, full of discoveries and new ideas. Close interaction with the text you are reading make sparks fly.

Your paraphrases of the Dewey and de Tocqueville passages are no doubt different from the samples here, pointing out other aspects of the originals. In some instances, your versions may even be closer to the meaning of the originals. Comparing paraphrases and explaining the differences among them will help you better understand the shades of meaning conveyed by different word choices.

WRITING ASSIGNMENT

Paraphrase either passage A or passage B. Passage A is the continuation of the selection from de Tocqueville discussing attitudes toward the upper classes. Passage B, from the *Congressional Quarterly*, considers the changing economic attitudes toward protecting the environment.

A.

Of the Effect of Democracy on Character
(continued)

It has been supposed that the secret instinct which leads the lower orders to remove their superiors as much as possible from the direction of public affairs is peculiar to France: This is an error, however; the instinct to which I allude is not French, it is democratic; it may have been heightened by peculiar political circumstances, bur it owes its origin to a higher cause. In the United States the people do not hate the higher classes of society, but are not favorably inclined towards them and carefully exclude them from the exercise of authority. They do not fear distinguished talents, but are rarely fond of them. In general, everyone who rises without their aid seldom obtains their favor.

While the natural instincts of democracy induce the people to reject distinguished citizens as their rulers, an instinct not less strong induces able men to retire from the political arena, in which it is so difficult to retain their independence, or to advance without becoming servile. This opinion has been candidly expressed by Chancellor Kent, who says, in speaking with high praise of that part of the Constitution which empowers the executive to nominate the judges: "It is indeed probable that the men who are best fitted to discharge the duties of this high office would have too much reserve in their manners, and too much austerity in their principles, for them to be returned by the majority at an election where universal suffrage is adopted." Such were the opinions which were printed without contradiction in America in the year 1830!

I hold it to be sufficiently demonstrated that universal suffrage is by no means a guarantee of the wisdom of the popular choice. Whatever its advantages may be, this is not one of them.

B.

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Knowing When to Paraphrase

If you were to paraphrase all your reading, you would get to read very little, although you would know that little reading very well. Obviously, paraphrasing for your own purposes should be saved for extremely difficult passages that must be worked through word by word to wring out all the meaning.

Paraphrasing can also serve you in your own writing: you can use the paraphrase to restate a passage in terms your reader will understand more clearly. You can also use paraphrase to interpret difficult concepts and to make obvious and explicit facts and ideas that are only implied in the original. You will need to paraphrase when you want to take precise notes of your reading and when you wish to mention another writer's exact ideas in your own research papers. Whenever you do paraphrase another's ideas, you must give specific credit through some form of documentation (see Chapter 11).

To Explain Simply

When someone who is not as knowledgeable as you is having difficulty understanding an assigned reading, the best way you can help is through paraphrase. If, for example, a younger member of your family is having problems with the reading for her ninth-grade class in social studies, she may ask your help in explaining the Preamble to the Constitution:

> We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

You might help out by paraphrasing the original something like this:

> All the citizens of the United States are setting up and agreeing to this set of basic rules for our government. We are doing this for several reasons. We desire a better government with fewer problems than we had before. We want to guarantee that everyone is treated fairly. We want to make sure that we have peace within the country and that we can protect ourselves from outside attack. We want to help all of us live better. And we want to enjoy freedom not just for ourselves but for all the people who come after us.

Notice how the paraphrase makes the passage easier to understand. A long, complex sentence is broken down into several short ones, and the parts are rearranged so that only one idea is discussed at a time. The unfamiliar terms, such as *domestic tranquility,* are replaced by more common words, such as *peace within the country.* Finally, abstractions such as *general welfare* are made more concrete, as in *all of us live better.*

In many technical and scientific fields, paraphrasing basic principles helps explain the complexities of a subject to the reader. Textbooks and popularizations of science often rely heavily on simplifying paraphrases of more complex writing.

To Interpret the Text

In addition to helping the student, the paraphrase can help professionals agree on the meaning of important pieces of writing. In literature, philosophy, and religion, experts often disagree on their interpretations of significant books. Only by paraphrase can they make their readings explicit enough to compare and discuss.

Another area where it is essential for professionals to develop a shared understanding of important texts is the law. Many legal books attempt to clarify exactly what particular laws say and, consequently, how they should be applied in particular circumstances. If there were not some agreement over the meaning of laws, our system of government would collapse.

However, laws as originally phrased frequently have ambiguous or unspecific meanings, which leave unclear how they should be applied to a particular case. In all legal arguments, the courts must interpret the exact meaning of laws; thus many parts of legal decisions are a kind of extended paraphrase, clarifying the meaning and function of the laws. Legal textbooks, in turn, make use of these decisions and other legal precedents in order to restate the laws in terms of current legal practice.

Consider, for example, the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution. This part of the Bill of Rights outlaws "cruel and unusual punishment." You can see that the exact meaning of the phrase *cruel and unusual punishment* is open to various interpretations. What makes one punishment cruel and another acceptable? If it weren't unpleasant, it wouldn't be a punishment. The only way to clarify the meaning is to include much legal background in the paraphrase, as Corwin and Peltason do in *Understanding the Constitution:*

> The historic punishments banned are burning at the stake, crucifixion, breaking on the wheel, the rack and thumbscrew, and in some circumstances, solitary confinement. Capital punishment inflicted by hanging, electrocution, lethal gas, or a firing squad are permissible. And the Supreme Court has ruled that there was no constitutional inhibition against electrocuting a prisoner after a first attempt failed because of a power breakdown.
>
> Punishment may be cruel and unusual if it is out of all proportion to the offense as, for example, capital punishment for a petty crime. The Supreme Court declared unconstitutional a California statute that made the mere act of being addicted to drugs a crime because it inflicted punishment simply for being ill. Chief Justice Warren, speaking for the Court in an opinion supported by only three other justices, ruled that Congress violated the Eighth Amendment when it attempted to make loss of citizenship part of the punishment for members of the armed forces who had been convicted and dishonorably discharged for desertion during time of war.

This passage aims at a nonprofessional audience; legal points are, of course, explored in much greater detail in books for practicing lawyers.

To Restate the Case

Works like the United States Constitution and the Bible express laws and ideas on which people build their lives. Thus paraphrases that expand on their full meaning are valuable in themselves. More often, writers use paraphrases of specific passages as passing references or as background material. If a philosopher wants to take issue with the ideas of a previous thinker, the philosopher must first restate the point he is arguing against. If a historian of science wants to show how one idea grew out of another, she must restate both ideas before she can demonstrate the connection. If a lawyer wants to cite an earlier judicial interpretation that strengthens his case, he must restate the important points of that judicial interpretation. In each instance, a precise paraphrase is often the method used to restate a passage. The other methods of restating a text passage are by quoting directly or by summarizing the major points. Each method has its advantages for different situations. The comparative advantages and appropriate times to use each are discussed in detail in Chapter 11.

The paraphrase allows you to make your point complete, just as a quotation does, but it is more flexible in allowing you to fit the original material into the flow of your argument. Through the paraphrase you can bring out your interpretation, and you can emphasize those points that

are most crucial to your argument. Moreover, you can write the paraphrased sentences to fit in smoothly with the surrounding material of your argument. Your argument does not have to stop short as another voice takes over; with paraphrase, the voice always remains your own.

You must always clearly identify the source (both author and text) of the ideas you paraphrase. This documentation allows the reader to distinguish between your ideas and the ideas you derived from your source. (See Chapter 11 for a full description of documentation.)

James Madison, for example, paraphrased parts of the Constitution effectively in *Federalist Paper Number* 62. Before the Constitution was approved, Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay wrote a series of newspaper articles in support of the proposed government. In one of these articles, Madison discussed the proposed composition of the Senate. In order to argue in behalf of various provisions of Article I, Section 3 of the Constitution, he first provided paraphrases of those provisions. However, because he is paraphrasing instead of quoting, he can also bring in material from an earlier section of the Constitution, which describes the composition of the House of Representatives. Thus, paraphrase gives Madison the flexibility to compare the provisions of two sections within a single sentence. Once he has set up his comparisons through paraphrase, he can then argue in favor of the provisions.

> The qualifications proposed for senators, as distinguished from those of representatives, consist in a more advanced age and a longer period of citizenship. A senator must be thirty years of age at least; as a representative must be twenty-five. And the former must have been a citizen nine years; as seven years are required for the latter. The propriety of these distinctions is explained by the nature of the senatorial trust, which, requiring greater extent of information and stability of character, requires at the same time that the senator should have reached a period of life most likely to supply these advantages; and which, participating immediately in transactions with foreign nations, ought to be exercised by none who are not thoroughly weaned from the prepossessions and habits incident to foreign birth and education. The term of nine years appears to be a prudent mediocrity between a total exclusion of adopted citizens, whose merits and talents may claim a share in the public confidence, and an indiscriminate and hasty admission of them, which might create a channel for foreign influence on the national councils.

A STUDENT EXAMPLE FOR DISCUSSION

Frequently in your college courses you will be asked to discuss ideas and information presented in the books you are studying. In such discussions, as in your journal, you must identify the specific thoughts you are responding to so that the reader will know exactly what you are writing about. Paraphrase allows you to present in a precise way the thoughts you have gleaned from your reading. You can emphasize those aspects of the passage you will discuss while interpreting the original. In short, paraphrase allows you to set up the basic terms of your discussion.

This passage from Thoreau's *Walden* is followed by the beginning of a student paper written for an introductory course in environmental studies. The paper discusses some of the passage's underlying concepts.

> The very simplicity and nakedness of man's life in the primitive ages imply this advantage at least, that they left him still but a sojourner in nature. When he was refreshed with food and sleep he contemplated his journey again. He dwelt, as it were, in a tent of this world, and was either threading the valleys, or crossing the plains, or climbing the mountain tops. But lo! men have become the tools of their tools. The man who independently plucked the fruits when he was hungry is become a farmer; and he who stood under a tree for shelter, a

> housekeeper. We no longer camp as for a night, but have settled down on earth and forgotten heaven.

Notice how the student, Kevin Meehan, uses his opening paragraph to interpret and expand on key points in Thoreau's contrast between primitive and civilized life. In the same paragraph, Kevin also paraphrases what Thoreau says about primitive and civilized human beings' attitudes toward human needs. On the basis of Thoreau's statement, Kevin then makes his main point about our present-day relationship to the environment.

Sample use of Paraphrase

Thoreau Views Attitudes Toward Human Needs

In chapter one of Walden, entitled "Economy," Henry David Thoreau contrasts primitive and civilized life to show that the former is superior to the latter. He praises primitive or uncivilized life because those who lived in this state used nature to provide basic needs of food and shelter, and viewed these basic needs as means to a greater end: the journey of life in harmony with the natural world. In contrast, Thoreau criticizes civilized life because those who live in the modern world view basic needs as ends in themselves. Civilized human beings, in their obsession with things, gain material comfort and security but lose a spiritual connection with the natural world which gives life meaning.

Thoreau's assessment of what is wrong with American attitudes toward nature is even more relevant today than it was in the 19th century. The relationship between human beings and the earth has degenerated to a degree that Thoreau himself could not have imagined. Our definition of what needs are "basic" has expanded beyond food, clothing, and shelter to include cars, televisions, VCRs, and countless other gadgets and gizmos which supposedly make our lives complete. I agree with Thoreau about the danger of relying too much on things. We may think we own these "tools" but in fact these "tools" own us, and in the end, they separate us even further from the environment of which we are a part....

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1. Paraphrase each of the following aphorisms to bring out the full meaning.
   a. If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when? — Rabbi Hillel
   b. Judge not, that ye be not judged. — Jesus Christ
   c. Pleasure is brief as a flash of lightning, or like an autumn shower, only for a moment. — Buddha
   d. He who learns but does not think is lost; he who thinks but does not learn is in danger. —Confucius
   e. Nothing can harm a good man, either in life or after death. —Socrates
   f. It would be an unsound fancy and self-contradictory to expect that things which have never yet been done can be done except by means which have never yet been tried. —Francis Bacon
   g. All names of good and evil are metaphors; they do not express, they merely beckon. He is a fool who would want definite knowledge from them. —Friedrich Nietzsche

2. Paraphrase the opening lines of *The Declaration of Independence* in order to explain the meaning fully and clearly to a ninth-grade student:

> When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands, which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.-We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

3. Compare your paraphrase of the opening lines of the Declaration of Independence with H. L. Mencken's version of the same lines. By his paraphrase, Mencken was commenting on the level at which most Americans discuss politics. By having fun with a certain style of language, Mencken seems to be criticizing a way of thinking. In a short essay, discuss how Mencken's version changes the original and what exact point you think Mencken was making.

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4. Paraphrase the following excerpt from the conclusion of the book *The Engineering of Consent: Democracy and Authority in Twentieth Century America* by political historian William Graebner. The book describes through many historical examples how citizens of the United States during this century have been willing to participate in many authoritarian (and therefore undemocratic) structures. Workers followed the orders of bosses, and students obeyed teachers and principals. These authoritarian structures, however, were described and justified in terms of democracy. In this section Graebner generalizes and draws together what he has found. In your paraphrase, interpret the full meaning of the text to demonstrate your understanding to your instructor.

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5. As preparation for a research paper on the history of conservation in the United States, paraphrase the following excerpt from George Perkins Marsh's discussion (written in 1864) of human beings' responsibility for preserving nature.

> Man has too long forgotten that the earth was given to him for usufruct alone, not for consumption, still less for profligate waste. Nature has provided against the absolute destruction of any of her elementary matter, the raw material of her works; the thunderbolt and the tornado, the most convulsive throes of even the volcano and the earthquake, being only phenomena of decomposition and recomposition. But she has left it within the power of man irreparably to derange the combinations of inorganic matter and of organic life, which through the night of aeons she had been proportioning and balancing, to prepare the earth for his habitation, when, in the fulness of time, his Creator should call him forth to enter into its possession.
>
> ... man is everywhere a disturbing agent. Wherever he plants his foot, the harmonies of nature are turned to discords. The proportions and accommodations which insured the stability of existing arrangements are overthrown. Indigenous vegetable and animal species are extirpated, and supplanted by others of foreign origin, spontaneous production is forbidden or restricted, and the face of the earth is either laid bare or covered with a new and reluctant growth of vegetable forms, and with alien tribes of animal life. These intentional changes and substitutions constitute, indeed, great revolutions; but vast as is

their magnitude and importance, they are ... insignificant in comparison with the contingent and unsought results which have flowed from them.

The fact that, of all organic beings, man alone is to be regarded as essentially a destructive power, and that he wields energies to resist which, nature—that nature whom all material life and all inorganic substance, obey—is wholly impotent, tends to prove that, though living in physical nature, he is not of her, that he is of more exalted parentage, and belongs to a higher order of existences than those born of her womb and submissive to her dictates.

There are, indeed, brute destroyers, beasts and birds and insects of prey—all animal life feeds upon, and, of course, destroys other life,—but this destruction is balanced by compensations. It is, in fact, the very means by which the existence of one tribe of animals or of vegetables is secured against being smothered by the encroachments of another; and the reproductive powers of species, which serve as the food of others, are always proportioned to the demand they are destined to supply. Man pursues his victims with reckless destructiveness; and, while the sacrifice of life by the lower animals is limited by the cravings of appetite, he unsparingly persecutes, even to extirpation, thousands of organic forms which he cannot consume.

The earth was not, in its natural condition, completely adapted to the use of man, but only to the sustenance of wild animals and wild vegetation....

[But men] ... cannot subsist and rise to the full development of their higher properties, unless brute and unconscious nature be effectually combated, and, in a great degree, vanquished by human art. Hence, a certain measure of transformation of terrestrial surface, of suppression of natural, and stimulation of artificially modified productivity becomes necessary. This measure man has unfortunately exceeded. He has felled the forests whose network of fibrous roots bound the mould to the rocky skeleton of the earth; but had he allowed here and there a belt of woodland to reproduce itself by spontaneous propagation, most of the mischiefs which his reckless destruction of the natural protection of the soil has occasioned would have been averted. He has broken up the mountain reservoirs, the percolation of whose waters through unseen channels supplied the fountains that refreshed his cattle and fertilized his fields; but he has neglected to maintain the cisterns and the canals of irrigation which a wise antiquity had constructed to neutralize the consequences of its own imprudence. While he has torn the thin glebe [i.e., soil] which confined the light earth of extensive plains, and has destroyed the fringe of semi-aquatic plants which skirted the coast and checked the drifting of the sea sand, he has failed to prevent the spreading of the dunes by clothing them with artificially propagated vegetation. He has ruthlessly warred on all the tribes of animated nature whose spoil he could convert to his own uses, and he has not protected the birds which prey on the insects most destructive to his own harvests.

6. Work collaboratively with several classmates to write a modern paraphrase of Andrew Marvell's poem "To His Coy Mistress." What if the poem had been written in the late twentieth century by a college student? What if the speaker in the poem had been a woman seeking a commitment from a man? Focus on content and tone (don't worry about rhyme) as you update Marvell's poem for the present day.

To His Coy Mistress
Andrew Marvell

Had we but world enough, and time,
This coyness, lady, were no crime.
We would sit down, and think which way
To walk, and pass our long love's day.
Thou by the Indian Ganges' side
Shouldst rubies find; I by the tide
Of Humber would complain. I would
Love you ten years before the Flood,
And you should, if you please, refuse

Till the conversion of the Jews.
My vegetable love should grow
Vaster than empires, and more slow;
And hundred years should go to praise
Thine eyes and on thy forehead gaze,
Two hundred to adore each breast,
But thirty thousand to the rest:
An age at least to every part,
And the last age should show your heart.
For, lady, you deserve this state,
Nor would I love at lower rate.
But at my back I always hear
Time's winged chariot hurrying near;
And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity.
Thy beauty shall no more be found,
Nor in thy marble vault shall sound
My echoing song; then worms shall try
That long preserved virginity,
And your quaint honor turn to dust,
And into ashes all my lust.
The grave's a fine and private place,
But none, I think, do there embrace.
Now, therefore, while the youthful hue
Sits on thy skin like morning dew,
And while thy willing soul transpires
At every pore with instant fires,
Now let us sport us while we may,
And now, like am'rous birds of prey,
Rather at once our time devour
Than languish in his slow-chapped power.
Let us roll all our strength and all
Our sweetness up into one ball,
And tear our pleasures with rough strife
Thorough the iron gates of life.
Thus, though we cannot make our sun.
Stand still, yet we will make him run.

7. Obtain the rules or by-laws of your student government or of any organization in which you take an active part. Pick out a passage that defines some of the rights or responsibilities that bear on your actions as a member or that you might use to your advantage within the organization. Paraphrase the selection you've chosen in order to explain its meaning and to emphasize your freedom to act most effectively within the organization.

8. Imagine that you are taking an environmental studies course and have been asked to write a short essay in response to one of the following passages by Muir (pages 38-39), Thoreau (pages 44-45), or Marsh (pages 46-47) or from the *Congressional Quarterly* (page 41). Write a two hundred-word essay (similar to the example on page 41). Be sure to identify the source of the idea you are discussing and to begin with a paraphrase of the relevant passage.

9. Imagine that you are taking a course in American government. For that course write a short essay (about two hundred words) discussing how well your experience of contemporary American democracy jibes with the ideas of any passage on democracy presented in this chapter—one by Thoreau (pages 34-35), Mill (page 35), Dewey (pages 36 and 38), de

Tocqueville (pages 39 and 41), or Graebner (page 46). In the opening of your essay, paraphrase relevant parts of the passage, to identify the thoughts you will discuss.

10. Imagine that your college newspaper has a regular opinion column called “What I Learned in School Today,” where each week a different student comments on something controversial or interesting from class lectures, assigned readings, or personal reading. This week it is your turn to write the column. Begin your column of two to three hundred words with a paraphrase of the material you will discuss.