

Chapter 6

Reading Icons

Introduction

GENERATING CLASS DISCUSSION AND IN-CLASS WRITING

The chapter opens by describing how words and images are engaged in a “competition” or “battle” for the public’s attention. An icon might be a “representation of a sacred figure,” “an illustration of a plant or animal,” or simply a symbol of “the secular and the mundane” (p. 465). It is significant that all the definitions rely on the notion of images that “communicate specific meanings” (p. 466) and that attract cultural attention. You might ask students to list current cultural icons and explain what these icons represent for them. Direct students to consider both people and things that may convey the same ideas: For example, Pamela Anderson Lee and the Barbie Doll are both cultural touchstones for notions of plastic sexuality, male fantasy, and the dumb blonde.

You might also ask students to consider how America’s cultural icons have come to represent us—not always in a positive way—to the world. In America the McDonald’s arches may convey convenience and ingenuity, but in other cultures they may signify an oppressive American presence that is crushing local culture. Even within our borders, certain commercial icons of success—such as Wal-Mart or Walt Disney—have been criticized for representing a move away from American individualism toward conformism. Other icons—such as Elvis Presley and Marilyn Monroe, who are featured in this chapter—have come to symbolize both the American dream and the American nightmare. You might ask students to identify contemporary icons that play a paradoxical role within our culture. In this way, students could begin to answer the question that ends the introduction: “How do these multiple perspectives differ from, alter, or contribute to [their] understanding of—and experience with—icons in contemporary American culture?” (p. 466).



For additional resources for the selections in this chapter (including exercises and annotated links), go to www.seeingandwriting.com.

Mercedes-Benz, *What Makes a Symbol Endure?*

GENERATING CLASS DISCUSSION AND IN-CLASS WRITING

Most students will immediately recognize the Mercedes icon and know that it stands for wealth and prestige. Indeed, during the 1980s many Mercedes owners in large urban areas lost their hood ornaments to thieves who began wearing them as status-symbol necklaces. Fewer students may take the time to relate the symbol to the others in the ad. You might ask students to relate the circular Mercedes icon to the other circular images: the smiley face, the yin and yang, the traffic light, even the atomic symbol of progress. All these lend a positive association to the Mercedes image while making it appear less stuffy. You might direct a discussion on how each of the other icons lends authority and audience appeal to the Mercedes icon.

Students might also consider how the layout of the ad plays the icons off each other. The viewer's eye is drawn through the matrix by color associations (the repeated green, yellow, red-orange, and purple-blue) that contrast with the simple background. Also, the missing cell seems designed for the Mercedes-Benz icon that has been broken out and carried across the ad, directly along the bottom edge of the matrix. You could ask students to think about the construction of this ad as a composition with a clear thesis that connects all the evidence shown in the design. What would that thesis be? It might be that a Mercedes is a sound purchase because it is enduring like the icons shown. Or it might be that a Mercedes fits perfectly into one's life, completing all these cultural connections just as its icon would complete this matrix.

ADDITIONAL WRITING TOPICS

1. Ask students to look back through the images presented in Chapter 5. How many icons do they find? What do these icons say about America?
2. Later in this chapter, David Butow's photo of a storefront window captures a number of icons—Betty Boop, James Dean, the Three Stooges, and

the Statue of Liberty (to name but a few). Ask students to imagine the ad and the photo swapping each other's contents, with the ad's icons

being displayed in a window as trinkets and the photo's items being pictured in this ad. How does that affect the students' view of the icons?

CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER TEXTS

1. In Jane Yolen's poem, "Grant Wood: American Gothic," the narrator states "We are not what we own/We own what we would be" (p. 473). Ask students to analyze the Mercedes logo using Yolen's poem as a framework.

2. The array of icons in the Mercedes ad may remind some people of Jesse Gordon's Op-Art in the same chapter (pp. 524–25). Ask students to imagine the people in Gordon's photos as icons. What connections among the people do they see when viewing them through this lens?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING, THINKING, AND WRITING

print

Kimes, Beverly Rae. *The Star and the Laurel: The Centennial History of Daimler, Mercedes and Benz, 1886–1986*. Montvale: Mercedes-Benz of North America, 1986.

Margolin, Victor. *The Promise and the Product: 200 Years of American Advertising Posters*. New York: Macmillan, 1979. A large book with many illustrations.

web

www.mbusa.com/brand/container.jsp/heritage
A short pictorial history of the evolution of trademarks as symbols from 1902 to 1989.

www.mercedes-benz.com/e/mbclassic This page shows the development of the car throughout the company's history.

Links for the selections in this chapter can be found at www.seeingandwriting.com.

**PAIR: Grant Wood, *American Gothic*
Guy Davenport, excerpt from *The Geography of
the Imagination*
with Jane Yolen, *Grant Wood: American Gothic***

GENERATING CLASS DISCUSSION AND IN-CLASS WRITING

Wood's painting should be familiar to most students. Even if they've never seen the original, they will probably recognize it from the numerous parodies that have been created for—among other things—cartoon characters and film posters. You might begin discussion by asking students why this 1930 painting has endured as an American icon. Some students might note that the stoic farmer represents the hardworking individual, the backbone of America. Other students might feel that the painting is outdated and no longer represents America. You could also ask students to freewrite about the lives of the figures in the painting. Ask students how they see the people in the painting. How do they read their expressions? What is the relationship between the man and the woman? Why is the woman looking away?

You might have students read the essay after they have discussed or written about the painting. Davenport states that Wood's sister and dentist posed for the painting in 1929, and that the dentist had held a rake and not a pitchfork (para. 2). The rest of the essay examines elements of the painting—from the architecture of the house to the clothing of the figures—and supplies the historical and cultural derivation for each, providing readers with a different way to look at "this painting to which we are blinded by familiarity and parody" (para. 3). In the fifth paragraph, for example, Davenport notes that the bamboo sunscreen is from China and the sash-windows from Europe, while the screen door is "distinctly American." He provides a brief look at the lineage of the wife's cameo brooch: "an heirloom passed down the generations, an eighteenth-century or Victorian copy of a design that goes back to the sixth century B.C." (para. 6). Yet it's the pose that pre-dates everything: "The pose is rather that of the Egyptian prince Rahotep, holding the flail of Osiris, beside his wife Nufrit—strict with pious rectitude, poised in absolute dignity, mediators between heaven and earth, givers of grain, obedient to the gods" (para. 11).

Davenport does discuss the painting's formal organization, but only briefly in regard to the pitchfork "whose triune shape is repeated throughout the painting, in the

bib of the overalls, the windows, the faces, the siding of the house, to give it a formal organization of impeccable harmony” (para. 21). Davenport acknowledges the possibility of the painting being “a statement about Protestant diligence on the American frontier,” but he observes another theme: “a tension between the growing and the ungrowing, between vegetable and mineral, organic and inorganic, wheat and iron” (para. 22).



For an interactive visual exercise for this selection, go to www.seeingandwriting.com.

ADDITIONAL WRITING TOPICS

1. Ask students to freewrite about their reaction to the painting. Are they able to see it from a fresh perspective, or have they been “blinded by familiarity and parody” (para. 3)?
2. If the freewriting exercise proves Davenport’s statement regarding the painting being too familiar, you could discuss how his purpose—to present the familiar in a different way—should be a guide for the students’ own essays. You might also suggest that they research a famous piece of artwork from another culture and write an essay that offers a fresh perspective on it.

(This might be a good alternative to the second Writing prompt in the text if students have difficulty approaching familiar art from new perspectives.)

3. At first, art critics were offended by the possibility that Wood was mocking rural Americans. Ask students to research this painting’s critical background. How did the painting become an American icon? Based upon this research, ask students to argue whether they feel this painting should remain an American icon.

CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER TEXTS

1. Students could research Raghubir Singh’s (p. 198) status as an artist in his country and write a paper that explains how his art reflects his culture’s values.
2. Ask students to take another look at Joe Rosenthal’s picture of the flag raising on Iwo Jima (p. 226). Rosenthal and Wood have created two of the

most popular American images. Ask students to write a paper that compares and contrasts the American values represented in each.



Links for the selections in this chapter can be found at www.seeingandwriting.com.

VISUALIZING CONTEXT: The Culture of Copy

GENERATING CLASS DISCUSSION AND IN-CLASS WRITING

Gordon Parks's photograph *American Gothic* plays upon Grant Wood's famous painting of the same name. Taken in 1942 (twelve years after Wood's painting), the photograph features a black cleaning woman holding a broom and standing next to a mop in front of the American flag. You might begin discussion by asking students to examine the photograph and freewrite about the feelings it evokes. Then ask students to compare the photograph to Wood's painting. If they wrote about their reaction to Wood's painting, ask them to compare their reactions to each. Do they find that Wood's painting celebrates America, whereas Parks's photograph indicts it? Do they see stoicism in the farmer's face and in the cleaning woman's? Do they see Parks's photograph as a mere parody of Wood's work? If students are in disagreement over these issues, ask them to back up their statements. If you are in a computer classroom, you could have students search the Internet for other takes on Wood's painting, many of which are clearly parodies; if you are not in a computer classroom, you could print out a few parodies and bring them to class.

Next you might direct students to examine the compositional elements in each work. Students will quickly note that the woman's presentation matches the farmer's: the stare, the glasses, the broom (replacing the pitchfork). The pitchfork is the center of Wood's painting and ties it together. Parks placed the cleaning woman between a broom and a mop—what does this suggest about her status? Just as Wood included pitchfork shapes in his painting to give it unity, Parks repeats certain images to tie his work together. Students might observe that the white dots on the woman's uniform resemble the blurred stars in the flag. Less obvious is the repetition of the flag's vertical stripes in the vertical ridges of the broom. You might also ask students about the position of the flag. Would they react differently to this picture if the flag were horizontal instead of vertical? Do they see oppression in the way the stripes fall on the woman?

ADDITIONAL WRITING TOPICS

1. You might suggest that students reread Jane Yolen's poem on Wood's painting. Ask them to follow the form of Yolen's poem as they write their own poem about Parks's photograph. If stu-

dents have a difficult time comparing the photograph and the painting in class discussion, this might provide another way.

2. Poverty and racism are often the subjects of Parks's photography. Ask students to research

Parks's work as well as the status of African Americans in the 1940s. Then have them write an essay that explores how this information affects their reading of his photograph and its use of Wood's painting.

CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER TEXTS

1. In the chapter's Looking Closer section, the mural in Sunnyside, Queens re-creates the famous image of the flag raising at Iwo Jima. In this image, though, firefighters and police officers replace the soldiers. How do the artists use Rosenthal's image in this painting? How do they want it to be perceived?

2. If students express interest in the parodies of *American Gothic*, they could search the Internet for parodies and write an expository essay about how the parodies tap into our understandings of the original to create new meanings. On the surface,

many parodies will merely seem to be selling something, not creating new cultural meanings; urge students to examine how the goals of the parodies are meanings in themselves. For variety, you could also suggest that students research Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, Edvard Munch's *Scream*, James McNeill Whistler's *Whistler's Mother*, and Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam*.

 Links for the selections in this chapter can be found at www.seeingandwriting.com.

Adbusters, Ten Steps to the Creation of a Modern Media Icon

GENERATING CLASS DISCUSSION AND IN-CLASS WRITING

In this essay, Kingwell satirizes the media by presenting the predictability with which it turns people into icons. In the previous class session, you might ask students to bring pictures of media icons (preferably dead ones because death occurs in Kingwell's fourth step) to class for discussion of this essay; if you are in a computer classroom, you could have students search for images on the Internet. You could use the pictures as points of reference as you discuss Kingwell's ten steps. Or you might begin discussion by asking students to each write a list of five media icons. As you discuss the essay, you can ask the students how the icons they listed fit into Kingwell's steps.

(text pages 474–79) **205**

The first step defines “icon” as “‘image,’ which is everything” (para. 1). According to Kingwell, the public loves what cameras love: “So create an image—one the cameras, and therefore we, will love” (para. 1). The second step states that the image’s aesthetic appeal must be at one extreme or the other: “The image must be drastically beautiful or compellingly ugly” (para. 2). Kingwell is at his most specific in the second step, naming actual icons, which he does not do in other steps. He states that the female icon must have a “smooth face” and “impeccably ‘tasteful’ clothing” (para. 2). Students might note that female celebrities attending award ceremonies are often the focus of the “Best and Worst Dressed” analyses in magazines and television shows. The best-dressed women are complimented by the media; the worst-dressed are ridiculed. Kingwell also observes that the female icon is “a flat surface of emotional projection, the real-world equivalent of a keyboard emoticon” (para. 2). He then gives examples, providing the equivalent icon for each: “Icon frowning bravely at diseased child or crippled former soldier in hospital bed: :-)” (para. 2). What is Kingwell’s tone here? How do students read the examples? Is Kingwell targeting the women for being fake? Or is he implicating the media in choosing women whose expressions fit this criteria? He later lists “Jackie, Di, [and] Barbra” as examples of women with “faux-intimate” names. Do they fit the female icon criteria?

The male icon, on the other hand, needs to appear “so overwhelmingly tawdry and collapsed, preferably from some high-cheekbone peak of youthful beauty, that it acquires a can’t-look-away magnetism, the sick pull of a human car wreck” (para. 2). Students should note how Kingwell creates a definite tone in this sentence by equating the icon’s magnetism with “the sick pull of a human car wreck.” Do students agree that the attention given to icons is “sick”? Signs of “hard living” are also crucial. Kingwell lists musicians—Johnny Cash, Mick Jagger, Kurt Cobain, to name a few—whose faces are “leathery” and “pitted,” showing “evidence of drug use and chain-smoking” (para. 2).

The remaining steps involve the separation of the person from the icon. The third step states that “[t]here must be a narrative structure that bathes the icon in the pure light of the fairy tale or morality play” (para. 3). The nature of the narrative largely depends upon the icon’s death since, as Kingwell states, “iconography is very much a postmortem affair” (para. 4). The completion of the icon’s life “is the business of storytellers and their audience, the cameras and their lights” (para. 4). The story becomes more effective if the death is “violent, messy, and a bit mysterious” (para. 4). Specific names are noticeably absent here. You might ask students to consider why Kingwell

does not provide obvious examples: Elvis, Marilyn Monroe, Kurt Cobain, Princess Di. By not supplying such a list, he makes the readers fill in the blanks; this only helps him by not having to attempt an exhaustive list but also proves the essay's point: The media's narrative is so predictable that he does not *need* to provide specific names. Can students think of an icon's death that does not match Kingwell's criteria? You might point out that Princess Di's death was followed a few days later by Mother Theresa's. Yet Mother Theresa's death was overshadowed by Di's in the media. Was it because the cameras loved Di more? Ask students to apply Mother Theresa and Princess Di to each of Kingwell's steps, particularly steps 5 to 8, which seem to obliquely refer to Di.

Following the death is "an outbreak of hysterical mourning, baseless and all the more intense for being so. (Nobody feels so strongly about someone they actually know)" (para. 5). Some students might be offended by this statement. The media showed the enormous loss felt by some fans on the passing of Kurt Cobain, George Harrison, and Aaliyah. Do some students identify with this sense of loss, or do they agree with Kingwell's assertion that it is "baseless"? Kingwell mentions "panel discussions" and funeral broadcasts, which will probably remind students of the media coverage given to the deaths of George Harrison and Princess Di. As an example of the media's predictable "narrative structure," some students might even recall that Elton John's song "English Rose" for Princess Di was a lyrical reworking of "Candle in the Wind," his song for Marilyn Monroe.

If the fifth step involved the public's bringing on the icon, the purging comes in the sixth step. This step involves the public noting the icon's "real faults and shortcomings" (para. 6). By now, the icon has become so disengaged from the person that faults become "evidence that the icon was 'after all' human—a suggestion, that, in its very making, implies the opposite" (para. 6). Kingwell notes that the reaction to this development—by the media and the public—is characterized by thoughtlessness. The media tells the icon-is-human story "because individual producers and anchors will be unable to imagine doing otherwise" (para. 6). Then the public mindlessly accepts the media's story: "Most people will accept this because to do otherwise would hurt their brains" (para. 6). Are students offended by Kingwell's tone in this sentence? You might remind them to consider Kingwell's original audience—readers of *Adbusters*, people accustomed to criticism of the media and the public.

In steps 7 to 9, the icon begins "its final divorce from the person depicted" (para. 7). It appears everywhere: "The face (or rather, The Face) looms outward from glossy paper, T-shirts, fridge magnets, posters, Halloween masks and coffee mugs" (para. 7). Step

8 involves academic studies, sightings, and conspiracy theories. Step 9 occurs years later and fully separates the icon from the person: “the icon now becomes pure zero-degree image, a depicted lifestyle without a life, a face without a person, a spiritual movement without context or meaning” (para. 9). In the final line of the ninth step, Kingwell provocatively states that this focus upon a media icon prevents us from engaging in real interactions. It is “the everything (and nothing) we sought all along: communion without community” (para. 9). Ask students to consider why we might desire such an outcome. Is it safer to feel close to an icon rather than to one’s neighbor?

Although the ten-part structure helps to maintain the theme of how predictably icons are manufactured by the media, it also limits Kingwell’s areas of discussion. Students might wonder about ideas that Kingwell does not address. How has the media fallen into this lock-step pattern? How much of a part do celebrities play in their own iconography? What are the broader implications here? Kingwell implies that the public’s focus on media icons prevents them from doing important things: “[It] keeps them happy and ensures that no larger form of public participation—say, protesting a tax hike or program cut, resisting a corporate takeover—will ever cross their minds as possible, let alone desirable” (para. 5). However, Kingwell does not elaborate upon this idea. The ten-part structure permits little deviation to consider such ideas.

ADDITIONAL WRITING TOPICS

1. Ask students to freewrite about the celebrity they find the most fascinating or meaningful.
2. Have students research several icons to see how well Kingwell’s steps apply to them. Based upon this research, students can write a paper that either builds upon Kingwell’s ideas or refutes them.
3. Kingwell hints at broader implications of the public’s fascination with media icons. Direct students to develop one of these ideas in an essay of their own.

CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER TEXTS

1. In “Show and Tell” (p. 637), Scott McCloud considers the importance of both the verbal and the visual in texts. Skim through the opening pages of McCloud’s piece, and then ask students to consider how Kingwell could have included the visual in his essay. Did they “see” images of people or events as they read his essay? Would Kingwell have benefited from inserting pictures in his essay?
2. Kingwell notes how female icons must wear “impeccably ‘tasteful’ clothing” (para. 2). In Tom Perrotta’s essay, he notes how much of Britney

Spears's popularity is dependent upon her sexuality, much of which came from her midriff-baring outfits. You might ask students to consider the popularity of such clothing throughout the music industry and society. Students will probably note how other teen pop-singers—Christina Aguilera, Jessica Simpson, Mandy Moore—quick-

ly fell in line with similar outfits. During this discussion, the subject of the influence of media icons upon society might arise. If students show interest in the subject, you might ask them to write an essay that explores how media icons and society influence each other.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING, THINKING, AND WRITING

print

Kingwell, Mark. *Better Living: In Pursuit of Happiness from Pluto to Prozac*. New York: Crown Publishing, 2000.

———. *Marginalia: A Cultural Reader*. Toronto: Penguin, 1999.

———. *The World We Want: Virtue, Vice and the Good Citizen*. Toronto: Viking, 2000.

web

www.adbusters.org/home/ Homepage of Adbusters, featuring spoof ads, commercials,

and campaigns that criticize corporations and the media.

Links for the selections in this chapter can be found at www.seeingandwriting.com.

audio/visual

Simone. Directed by Andrew Niccol. 2002. Distributed by New Line Cinema. Starring Al Pacino and Catherine Keener. Pacino plays a film producer who fools the public with a digitally created actress.

Andy Warhol *Large Triple Elvis, 1963*; *The Twenty Marilyn's, 1962*

GENERATING CLASS DISCUSSION AND IN-CLASS WRITING

Each of Warhol's paintings involves repetition of an iconic image. You might ask students to comment on this repetition and the way in which it is achieved. For example, Elvis Presley is presented in full form but seems to be fading away, as if disappearing from the viewer's sight. In fact, this image is fairly representative of Elvis's cultural status at the time the painting was done. In contrast, Marilyn Monroe

is shown only in a head shot, so that she almost seems disembodied. Also, each image varies slightly from the others—more smudged, more blonde, and so on. Students might read this as a representation of the different fantasies and dreams projected onto Monroe. Or they might discuss how the repeated images stress Monroe as a commodity rather than a person, “transform[ing] her face into a series of brightly colored semi-abstract icons” (p. 479).

ADDITIONAL WRITING TOPICS

1. Ask students to freewrite about how a more modern icon might be presented by Warhol today.
2. Direct students to compare Warhol’s paintings of Elvis and Marilyn. In well-written essays they should account for all elements of the works: coloration, size of the icons, number of repetitions, and so on. How is the message about each icon similar to the other? How do the icons differ?
3. The headnote alludes to Warhol’s “fascination with all things glamorous” (p. 479). Ask students to identify a glamorous celebrity they might select for a Warhol-style portrait. What image of this celebrity would they begin with? Why? What message would they want their painting to send about the chosen cultural icon?

CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER TEXTS

1. Ask students to compare the repeated images of Marilyn Monroe with those of Madonna later in this chapter (pp. 508–09). In the early images Madonna was playing on Marilyn Monroe’s image, yet her life has clearly turned out differently from Monroe’s. How are the destinies of these icons reflected in their portraits?
2. Have students find additional Warhol paintings, such as *Campbell’s Soup Cans* and *Coke Bottles*, on the Internet. Warhol’s paintings of everyday things may remind students of Alfred Leslie’s *Television Moon* (p. 88). Ask students to compare these works and their approaches to commonplace objects. Do students sense that Warhol and Leslie have different attitudes toward their subjects?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING, THINKING, AND WRITING

print

Warhol, Andy. *Andy Warhol: A Retrospective*. New York: Museum of Modern Art, Bulfinch Press, 1989.

www web

www.artchive.com/ftp_site.htm An excerpt on Warhol from a Robert Hughes piece, an image gallery, articles, and links to the many Warhol sites online.

www.warhol.org The web site of the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Links for the selections in this chapter can be found at www.seeingandwriting.com.

audio/visual

Superstar: The Life and Times of Andy Warhol. Directed by Chuck Workman. 91 min. 1990. VHS videocassette, NR. Distributed by Vestron Video. Includes commentary from many people who were prominent in the entertainment industry during the 1960s and 1970s.

Sharon Olds, *The Death of Marilyn Monroe*

GENERATING CLASS DISCUSSION AND IN-CLASS WRITING

Olds's poem offers readers an image of the dead Marilyn Monroe, fallen far from her status as a screen goddess. You might ask students to consider the images in the poem: "cold body," "heavy as iron," "flattened by gravity." All convey an impression of Monroe's mortality and physicality; all deconstruct her luminous sexuality. In the end, Marilyn Monroe the icon was simply a human being who may not have been able to live under the weighty burden of serving as a living fantasy. Have students analyze the poem in terms of how the men treat Monroe's body, attempting to "close" her off from this world, and how their encounter with the mortal Monroe forever changes their relationship with each other. You might ask students if they have ever had a chance encounter with an icon and how this meeting changed their impression of the person.

Olds also addresses the contrast between the ideal and the real for the ambulance drivers. Students might discuss why the men's lives change. For example, why did one have nightmares, another become disenchanted with his family, and the last pause to listen to breathing? The men are impacted by Monroe's death, by her passing from the screen to the stretcher, from mortality to immortality. You might ask students to think about how a star becomes an icon. Is dying while still young and beautiful a requirement? They might think about other icons, such as James Dean or even Tupac Shakur. Contemporaries of stars like these who grew older and less idealized, such as Kim Novak (for Monroe) or Dr. Dre (for Shakur), have lost their status as icons and now seem to be mere celebrities, even almost has-beens.

ADDITIONAL WRITING TOPICS

1. Ask students to write a short response to Olds's poem. How would they describe its tone? What feelings does it evoke? Ask them to point to specific words and phrases.
2. Instruct students to find an image of Marilyn Monroe and to write a short essay that contrasts the vitality of the icon in the image with the gravity and weight of the dead woman in the poem.
3. Marilyn Monroe's status as an icon of female sexuality has grown over the years. Ask students to find two or three images of Monroe. They should write an essay that analyzes the qualities within the images that consistently establish an iconic portrait of Monroe. What stays the same throughout all the images? What is symbolized by these qualities?

CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER TEXTS

1. Ask students to turn back to Andy Warhol's presentation of Marilyn Monroe. How do Olds and Warhol comment on her role as an icon? Do they seem to make larger statements about the role of the icon in American culture?
2. The poem presents a contrast to Monroe's iconic sexuality. You might bring in some popular pictures of Monroe for students to examine as you discuss the poem.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING, THINKING, AND WRITING

print

Baty, S. Paige. *American Monroe: The Making of a Body Politic*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995. This book's focus is on Marilyn Monroe as America sees her now: "a surface that mirrors everything it touches, a site upon which to explore the character of the postmodern condition."

Monroe, Marilyn. *My Story*. New York: Stein and Day, 1974.

Olds, Sharon. *Blood, Tin, Straw*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999.

Rudnick, Paul. "The Blond: Marilyn Monroe." *Time*, 14 June 1999: 128ff. This article talks about Monroe as a "pop confection"; it also con-

tains a "Death as a Career Move" section highlighting other celebrities whose popularity seems to have increased after they died.

www. web

www.ellensplace.net/marilyn.html An extensive Marilyn Monroe fan site.

www.members.aol.com/PjaySin/marilyn.htm A monthly e-zine about Monroe, with plenty of photographs and links as well.

www.salon.com/weekly/interview960701.html A transcript of an interview with Sharon Olds.

www.wilmington.org/poets/olds.html A sound recording of Olds reading her poem *The Un-*

justly *Accused Child*, and a link to an article that contains two more poems.

Links for the selections in this chapter can be found at www.seeingandwriting.com.

audio/visual

Bromwich, David, and Alicia Ostriker, with John Ashberry and Sharon Olds. 1991. Recording. Poets in Person Series. Distributed by the Modern Poetry Association.

Marilyn Monroe: Life after Death. Directed by Gordon L. Freedman. 2 cassettes (100 min.). 1995. Videocassettes, NR. Distributed by United Artists Theatre Circuit. Performers include Hugh Hefner, Liz Smith, and Susan Stasberg.

The Seven Year Itch. Directed by Billy Wilder. 105 min. 1955. VHS videocassette, NR. Distributed by CBS/Fox Video. Performers include Tom Ewell and Marilyn Monroe.

Holly Brubach, *Heroine Worship: The Age of the Female Icon*

GENERATING CLASS DISCUSSION AND IN-CLASS WRITING

Brubach argues that women have a very different relationship to their icons than do men. She points out that female icons “prompt a fit of introspection” and “self-re- crimination” in women (para. 6). In part, Brubach feels this is the result of the way in which we choose icons and how they are “made famous, packaged as commodities and marketed to a public eager for novelty” (para. 3). You might ask students to comment on Brubach’s argument that men and women respond differently to celebrity icons. Students could list current icons and explain what they represent to women and to men. Do the male students agree with Brubach that men do “not so much . . . desire to be [a male icon] as . . . desire to be accepted by him” (para. 6)? Do the female students agree that women look at female icons and feel “that they need to remake themselves” (para. 8)?

Brubach also addresses the relationship between the proliferation of images of women and the effect of icons on women. In the past, “[t]here were no magazines, no photographs,” so “[m]ost likely a girl would have modeled herself on a female relative, or on a woman in her community” (para. 10). Now, Brubach believes, women are overly influenced by the visual icons that surround them. Because of these icons and the iconic role of women in culture, women feel “the need to assess [their] own poten-

tial to be found beautiful” (para. 14) rather than the need to achieve. In discussing these assertions, you might ask students to think about the people on whom they have modeled themselves. If they do not mention a relative or someone close, you might direct them to explain their choices. Have the female students followed Brubach’s suggestion that “[i]n the spirit of post-modernism, we piece ourselves together, assembling the examples of several women in a single personality” (para. 16)? Have the male students followed a similar path? Or do they fall into the icon-trap that Brubach describes?

Students might also discuss Brubach’s rhetoric. She clearly wants to isolate women and their relationships to iconic figures. She makes several very broad generalizations about men’s relationship to icons—with little support—and then dismisses them. You might ask the class to find examples that refute Brubach’s argument about men—or about women. Overall, the essay does little to link her assertions to specifics. It may even offer some misleading evidence. For example, Brubach’s entire “pantheon” of nineteenth-century female icons consists of three women: Sarah Bernhardt, George Sand, and Florence Nightingale. Her choices reflect her desire to argue that these women were noted for their accomplishments. However, one could easily compile another pantheon of nineteenth-century women—real and created—who were noted only for their looks, such as Lillie Langtry and even the Gibson Girl. You might ask students to consider how writers use evidence and examples to sway readers.

ADDITIONAL WRITING TOPICS

1. Ask students to respond to Brubach’s point that “a man’s idiosyncrasies enhance his looks; a woman’s detract from hers” (para. 15). Do they agree with Brubach?
2. Throughout the essay, Brubach’s definition of *icon* seems to shift—to expand and contract. Have students write an essay in which they isolate and analyze Brubach’s definition.
3. Brubach writes, “the images of women confronting a girl growing up in our culture are far more diverse, though not all of them can be interpreted as signs of progress” (para. 12). Instruct students to find several images of women they believe function as contemporary icons. Do these images represent progress for women?

CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER TEXTS

1. Brubach asserts, “Women have been the immortal repository of male fantasies—a lonesome role that many are nonetheless loath to relinquish, given the power it confers and the oblique

satisfaction it brings” (para. 14). Ask students to analyze the 1998 photo of Cindy Jackson (p. 370) using Brubach’s statement as a framework. How does this image support or refute her statement?

2. Direct students to interpret the images of Madonna in this chapter’s Retrospect as evidence that either supports or refutes Brubach’s argument.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING, THINKING, AND WRITING

print

Goodrich, Norma Lorre. *Heroines: Demigoddess, Prima Donna, Movie Star*. New York: Harper-Collins, 1993.

web

www.salon.com/people/feature/1999/11/11/brubach/index.html An interview with Holly Brubach.

Links for the selections in this chapter can be found at www.seeingandwriting.com.

VISUALIZING COMPOSITION: Metaphor

GENERATING CLASS DISCUSSION AND IN-CLASS WRITING

As the text notes, metaphor can be utilized during any stage of the writing process (para. 1). Most textbooks, however, only teach students how to differentiate metaphor from simile, and they feature exercises that help students to not mix metaphors. There is no easy way to show students how metaphor can help generate ideas. As with any invention technique, metaphors can fail to spark ideas as often as they succeed. To begin, though, you could engage students in a general discussion of how often we use metaphors. Many students will probably find humor in the school-as-prison metaphors presented in the text. Ask students how school is and is not like prison. For more examples, you could note how many of our social ills are discussed in violent terms:

1. We “fight battles” against poverty and homelessness. What is the benefit of discussing these issues in this way? Fighting involves opposing sides, enemies. Who is the enemy in the battle against poverty? Since there is no clear enemy, might this directionless aggression sometimes fall upon the poor and the homeless?

2. We wage a “war” against drugs. What is involved in warfare? How are war tactics applied against drugs? Isn’t the “war” against drug growers, pushers, and users? How does this metaphor affect our treatment of drug users? How might our thinking be different if instead of waging a “war” on drugs we sought to “cure” a drug “epidemic”? By discussing these examples, you can show students how thinking about metaphor can provide a new way of looking at a subject.

For practice, you might ask students to think of other metaphors to use in the Volkswagen ad. For the metaphor to be completely effective, it must also be applied to the last sentence: “We pluck the lemons; you get the plums.” In the previous chapter’s Visualizing Composition section, students examined a Visa ad that used the tagline “It’s your life. How do you want to spend it?” Ask students to discuss how life can be “spent.” Students might note that we spend time, which is what measures life. Since it is a credit card ad, the line also suggests “It’s your money. How do you want to spend it?” How are money and time similar? How are they different?

The text also notes that metaphor can help writers “create a structure for that prose” (para. 2). As an example, you could note how John Gray has structured many books around the metaphor that “men are from Mars” and “women are from Venus.” Similarly, a student writing about the horror of high school could structure an essay around the metaphor that he or she was Dante and that the high school contained the nine circles of Hell.

ADDITIONAL WRITING TOPICS

1. Ask students to create a metaphor to describe writing and to develop a paragraph around that metaphor. You can expand on this activity by asking students to list five activities and to create metaphors for those. (There are a number of metaphorical quotes by writers on writing that you could find and bring to class as examples.)
2. Ask students to write a brief essay that explores a commonly used phrase that depends upon metaphor.
3. Students could bring to class an essay written earlier in the semester. Have them exchange essays every five minutes as they read for possible ways in which to use metaphor.
4. Have students list the subjects they have written on or might yet write on during the semester. Ask them to spend five to ten minutes exploring ways in which to use metaphors for those subjects. You could then have students pass the lists around to suggest more ideas or help develop the metaphors.

CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER TEXTS

1. Ask students to turn back to Charles M. Young’s essay “Losing: An American Tradition” (p. 423). In it, he notes how sports imagery and war imagery are used interchangeably (para. 7). Direct students to come up with examples of war imagery used in sports and to discuss the effects such imagery might have.

2. Have students examine Chapter 7’s Visualizing Context section, which features the classic anti-drug ad that equates an egg in a frying pan with a brain on drugs. Why do we need a metaphor to tell us how drugs affect the brain? Ask students to attempt to explain how drugs affect the brain without using metaphors or similes. Students will probably unknowingly use metaphors.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING, THINKING, AND WRITING**print**

Gray, John. *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*. New York: Harper Collins, 1992.

Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.

www web

Links for the selections in this chapter can be found at www.seeingandwriting.com.

PORTFOLIO: Tibor Kalman**GENERATING CLASS DISCUSSION AND IN-CLASS WRITING**

Kalman’s photos are recolorings, literally, of celebrity portraits. The headnote indicates that his “often humorous design vocabulary . . . critiques the dishonesty and superficiality of most corporate public relations and advertising” (p. 493). The same vocabulary is operating here, as Kalman critiques our fascination with both celebrity and race. Viewers’ reactions to the photos show that what some may claim is a “superficial” quality—race—is actually often a determining factor in their attitudes toward others.

The Michael Jackson portrait plays with what many cultural critics have already identified as Jackson’s apparent desire to be white. He has resculpted and recolored his appearance so that little trace remains of the Michael who first gained fame as a member of the Jackson 5. Kalman’s photo simply finishes the job by adding blue eyes and blond hair. You might ask students to consider how the message of this portrait

might be different from that of the photo of Spike Lee. Unlike Jackson, Lee has put himself forward as a leader in the African American cultural community and has been quite outspoken about his belief that white Hollywood has actively tried to undermine African American success. Students might address the impact of the Malcolm X hat in the recolored Lee photo. On a black Spike Lee the association would be somewhat appropriate, but on the recolored white Lee the hat seems at best incongruous and at worst ridiculous.

The portraits of Arnold Schwarzenegger and Queen Elizabeth have been recolored and retouched to resemble black persons. Schwarzenegger was a leading action star of the 1980s and 1990s, a period that saw few inroads for African Americans in Hollywood. You might ask students to consider what his chances for success would have been if he were African American. For example, would his career have been like Danny Glover's—as the “buddy” but not the star? Would it have been like Eddie Murphy's—as the “comedian” but never the action hero? The portrait of the Queen is complicated by the historical fact that for hundreds of years the English monarchy held slaves of many ethnic backgrounds in colonies around the globe. Direct students to analyze the image in that context. Most students probably think of England as a predominantly white society, which is still largely true outside of London and a few other major cities. You might ask students if a black woman ever could be Queen of England. Because the crown passes through generations within the same family, the answer is almost certainly no; and for the most part, the upper echelon of Britain's Parliament is white as well. Students might discuss the ways in which a monarchy sends a different message to ethnic populations than a democracy does. Does a black woman stand a chance of becoming a senator? a cabinet member? the president?

ADDITIONAL WRITING TOPICS

1. Ask students to write a short reaction to the recoloring of any one of these portraits. How has the recoloring process changed their thinking about the celebrity depicted?

2. Kalman says of our economic system that it “tries to make everything look right” (p. 493). Instruct students to choose one of the images and analyze it as a commentary on how everything is not “right” with our current system. For example,

they might explore why Michael Jackson would want to be white. What would he gain in our economic system? What would Spike Lee gain?

3. Have students do a quick survey of their friends and family by making two requests: Name at least three white individuals in political office in the United States or any other major country; and name at least three black individuals in political office in the United States or any

other major country. Then, use the results to comment on the image of Queen Elizabeth. How

many respondents could name black individuals in public office?

CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER TEXTS

1. Ask students to compare Kalman's photos with that by Guillermo Gómez-Peña (*Authentic Cuban Santeria*, p. 418). All the photos use humor to comment on the significance of race and ethnicity in our culture. Have students write a short essay in which they explain how effective humor may or may not be in dealing with such a serious subject, using the photos as evidence.

2. In this chapter's Visualizing Context section, Gordon Parks's photograph plays on Grant Wood's painting in a number of ways, perhaps the most prominent being in the race of the person pictured. Ask students to write an essay that compares the strategies used by Kalman and Parks and that explains the effects of those strategies.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING, THINKING, AND WRITING

print

Kalman, Tibor. *Perverse Optimist*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998. Published on the occasion of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art's exhibit of Kalman's works.

web

www.sfmoma.org/exhibitions/exhib_detail/99_exhib_tibor_kalman.html An exhibit by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art called "Tibor City." Includes a brief summary of Kalman's career.

Links for the selections in this chapter can be found at www.seeingandwriting.com.

audio/visual

Do the Right Thing. Directed by Spike Lee. 120 min. 1989. VHS videocassette, rated R. Distributed by MCA Home Video. A race riot breaks out after a dispute between an Italian pizzeria owner and an African American customer. Performers include Danny Aiello, Ossie Davis, Ruby Dee, Richard Edson, Giancarlo Esposito, Spike Lee, Bill Nunn, and John Turturro.

Tom Perrotta, *The Cosmic Significance of Britney Spears*

GENERATING CLASS DISCUSSION AND IN-CLASS WRITING

To find out whether Britney Spears matters in regard to popular culture, Perrotta compares Britney to Elvis, Madonna, and Kurt Cobain. It might be a good idea to begin discussion by getting students' opinions of Britney out of the way. You should ask what they think of Britney as a singer, a performer, and an icon. Most will probably speak negatively of Britney, although others might sheepishly admit that they like her. A few students might even take a positive stance regarding the pop singer. If you think that students might repeatedly interrupt discussion with rounds of Britney-bashing, this might be a way to avoid such a problem. Then you could take the students through the essay, examining Perrotta's claims and his methods of comparing and contrasting the artists. You might also begin discussion by asking students to read from their reading-response journals (see Additional Writing Topic 1).

Perrotta opens the essay by writing about the difficulty he had working after the September 11 attacks, especially since his essay's subject matter seemed insignificant in comparison. His tone seems embarrassed, almost apologetic: "In my case, this fairly common emotional response was exacerbated by the fact that I happened to be writing an essay about Britney Spears" (para. 2). Then he admits that he even had problems taking his subject seriously before the tragedy. Do students think that Perrotta is trying to avoid criticism by beating the critics to the punch? Or do they read genuine discomfort in his statements? You might remind students that this essay was published in December 2001, only a few months after the tragedy.

In the fourth paragraph, Perrotta asks the question that prompts the essay: "Does the fact that she's currently one of the biggest pop stars in the universe . . . make her by definition a figure of sociological influence?" He notes that we could easily "write her off as just another teen idol" (para. 5), but, as he points out, we have been surprised by other pop stars who became significant cultural figures. As an example, he points to Michael Jackson, "whose ghoulishly altered face tells a mythic and terrible story about race and celebrity in America" (para. 6). To see how she stands with other iconic artists, Perrotta breaks the essay into three sections in which he compares Britney to Elvis, Madonna, and Kurt Cobain.

Perrotta notes that Britney is similar to Elvis in the way she presents herself: "As Elvis did before her, Britney presents herself to the world as a divided personality—

shy and self-effacing in private, shockingly bold in public” (para. 8). Britney and Elvis also share southern roots and strong ties with their mothers. However, Elvis’s sound clearly bears the musically rich heritage of the South; Britney’s, on the other hand, shows no such signs and is “the musical equivalent of a big-budget Hollywood action movie” (para. 11). Elvis took the separate sounds of blues and country and combined them, creating a new musical style. Elvis made a new product, whereas Britney was made into a product: “Elvis created himself out of the materials at hand; Britney had a musical identity imposed on her that she gratefully accepted” (para. 13).

Regarding Britney and Madonna, Perrotta at first observes a major difference: Madonna has a challenging persona; Britney does not. Referring to Madonna’s film *Truth or Dare*, Perrotta notes that she “portrays herself as an unapologetic celebrity monster—vain, self-obsessed, willing to mock and humiliate anyone who crosses her path” (para. 15). Britney, on the other hand, in her *MTV Diary*, “emerges as the anti-Madonna, the celebrity without an ego” (para. 16). Next, Perrotta observes that they are both spiritual and sexual figures, but in different ways: “Britney may be more conventionally devout in her personal life, but Madonna is far and away the more religiously engaged artist of the pair” (para. 18). Even though Madonna has spoken about her Catholic background, listeners of her music would be aware of that background if she had never spoken of it. Britney’s music does not show her religious side, which can only be gathered from what she tells the public. Some of her songs might seem sexually suggestive, but her videos and musical performances are undeniably sexual; however, sexual themes infuse nearly every aspect of the media for Madonna. In a way, Madonna and Elvis have a genuine quality that Britney does not for Perrotta: “All I really know is that Madonna always seems deadly serious about what she’s doing or saying, whereas Britney always seems as if she’s kidding around” (para. 22).

Perrotta links Britney and Cobain by the circumstance of time and presents them as “the opposing bookends of the 1990s, poster children for a schizoid decade” (para. 25). Cobain’s dark side represents “a gloomy time of war and recession”; Britney is the “chipper emblem of a fat, happy country bubbling over with irrational exuberance” (para. 25). Cobain was uncomfortable with fame; Britney welcomes fame with open arms: “she was raised for success, in the same way that Cobain seems to have been raised for unhappiness” (para. 28).

Both ancillary pieces—a defaced poster of Britney (in a costume that recalls Elvis’s Vegas years) and an interview with a former college admissions dean—present negative views of Britney. The defaced poster is obviously negative, spoofing a MasterCard commercial as it lists prices for Britney’s nose, lips, and breasts. The interview is

less caustic, but far from glowing. In it, the dean recommends a course in “The Art of Superficiality” for Britney.

ADDITIONAL WRITING TOPICS

1. Before you assign this reading, you might ask students to keep a journal of their reactions as they read the essay. Have them make notes on how the essay surprises them and on how Perrotta structures it. Students should write about the expectations created by the essay’s title, and they should also consider why Perrotta mentions September 11 in the essay’s opening.
2. Ask students to freewrite about how musicians influence culture. Then, they can free-

write about how musicians become icons. This freewriting can prepare them for the next prompt.

3. Direct students to write an essay in which they argue in support of a musical artist who they think is or will become an important cultural figure. You might recommend that, as Perrotta does in this essay, they compare and contrast this artist with musicians who have become important cultural figures.

CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER TEXTS

1. In “Heroin Worship” (p. 486) Holly Brubach observes that female icons “prompt a fit of introspection” and “self-recrimination” in women (para. 6). Do your female students feel this way regarding Britney Spears? How do the male students view Britney? Does any introspection take place when they consider her?
2. During discussion, some students might state that Britney Spears is not that attractive—it’s her fame, lifestyle, and unattainable status that

make her so appealing. You might remind students that in Bruce Bower’s essay “Average Attractions” (p. 332) psychologist Ellen Berscheid makes a similar claim regarding celebrities, “whose appeal sometimes lies largely in perceptions indirectly linked to facial beauty, such as glamour and fame” (para. 17). How do students view Britney after reading this statement? Could they ever imagine her as an “ordinary” student in their class?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING, THINKING, AND WRITING

print


Cross, Charles. *Heavier Than Heaven: A Biography of Kurt Cobain*. New York: Hyperion Press, 2001.

Guralnick, Peter. *Careless Love: The Unmaking of Elvis Presley*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1998.

———. *Last Train to Memphis: The Rise of Elvis Presley*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1995.

Kelly, Karen, and Evelyn McDonnell, eds. *Stars Don’t Stand Still in the Sky: Music and Myth*. New York: New York University Press, 1998.

- Perrotta, Tom. *Election: A Novel*. New York: Putnam Publishing, 1997.
- . *Joe College*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000.
- . *The Wishbones*. New York: Penguin Putnam, 1998.
- Robb, Jackie. *Britney Spears: The Unauthorized Biography*. New York: HarperCollins, 1999.
- Spears, Britney, and Lynne Spears. *Britney Spears' Heart to Heart*. New York: Crown Publishing, 2000.
- Taraborrelli, J. Randy. *Madonna: An Intimate Biography*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001.

 **web**

Links on the selections in this chapter can be found at www.seeingandwriting.com.

audio/visual

Madonna. *The Immaculate Collection*. 1990. Compact disc. Distributed by Warner Brothers.

You might play “Like a Virgin” and “Justify My Love” and ask students to compare them to songs by Britney Spears.

Nirvana. *In Utero*. 1993. Compact disc. Distributed by Geffen Records. Since most students are probably too familiar with Nirvana’s “Smells Like Teen Spirit,” you might play “Heart Shaped Box” or “All Apologies,” songs that capture Cobain’s bleak despair noted by Perrotta.

Presley, Elvis. *Elvis '56*. 1996. Compact disc. Distributed by RCA. You might play “Hound Dog” to give students an idea of the new sound to which Perrotta refers.

Spears, Britney. *Britney*. 2001. Compact disc. Distributed by Jive. You might play “I’m a Slave 4 You,” Britney’s most suggestive song to date, and ask students to compare it to Madonna’s songs.

RETROSPECT: *Madonna, 1982–2002*

GENERATING CLASS DISCUSSION AND IN-CLASS WRITING

This series of photographs shows the various ways in which Madonna transformed her image over twenty years. According to the chapter introduction, one of the uses of the word *icon* is “to identify certain individuals who are the objects of attention and devotion, people who have taken on the status of an idol” (p. 466). These photos of Madonna demonstrate some of the strategies she has used to re-create her public persona. It is notable that she has never presented herself as a static image but instead as a continually shifting one. Thus, viewers are invited to experience a world of process with this “idol.”

You might ask students which images of Madonna they can identify with a particular period, controversy, or work of hers. Which images are the most familiar? Why?

ADDITIONAL WRITING TOPICS

1. Ask students to choose one photograph from this group and to use their skills of observation and analysis to write an explication of the Madonna icon they see represented.
2. Direct students to examine the first and the last of the images. Then, have them draft a comparison/contrast essay analyzing the similarities and differences between the two images. What conclusions can they draw about Madonna's life as an icon from observation alone?
3. Invite students to do a ten-minute in-class freewrite about the connotations of the word *Madonna*. "Perhaps the oldest association of the word [icon] is with the religious representation of a sacred figure" (p. 465). In what ways do Madonna as an image and Madonna as a word invite religious comparisons? Ask several students to share their writing with the class.
4. Have students write an essay in which they analyze the lyrics of a song that Madonna has written. Ask them to address the way in which the words do or do not support her image as an icon.

CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER TEXTS

1. Ask students to imagine these pictures recolored by Tibor Kalman. How would the black Madonna's career have been different throughout the years pictured here?
2. Have students look at Susan Bordo's essay "Never Just Pictures" in Chapter 7 (p. 557). Then, ask them to imagine Bordo's analysis of these photos of Madonna.

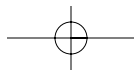
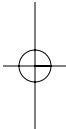
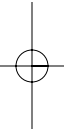
SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING, THINKING, AND WRITING

web

Links for the selections in this chapter can be found at www.seeingandwriting.com.

audio/visual

Truth or Dare. Directed by Alex Keshishian. 120 min. 1991. VHS videocassette, rated R. Distributed by Artisan Entertainment. A behind-the-scenes documentary of a Madonna world tour. Performers include Madonna et al.



Talking Pictures

This Talking Pictures assignment has students analyze a logo according to Rand's list of seven qualities of effectiveness. Students sometimes have difficulty distinguishing between summary and analysis, so you might remind them that they have to provide concrete details in support of each quality mentioned by Rand. Some qualities may seem closely related—for example, durability and timelessness. You might ask students to define the terms as a group in class before undertaking the assignment.

As an alternate assignment you might instruct students to compare and contrast two or three network logos according to several of Rand's criteria. It might be particularly interesting for students to contrast the logo of an older network (e.g., ABC, CBS, or NBC) with that of a newer network (e.g., Fox, UPN, or WB) or with that of a cable network (e.g., HBO, Comedy Central, or Lifetime). How do the newer logos differ from the older ones? Does each logo target a particular viewing audience (young or old; male or female)?

Touré, *Kurt Is My Co-Pilot*

GENERATING CLASS DISCUSSION AND IN-CLASS WRITING

Touré's essay on Dale Earnhardt Jr. touches on many subjects: race cars, the history of racecar driving, Earnhardt Jr.'s place in the sport, and Junior's relationship with his father. The main point of interest in this essay is how Touré makes Earnhardt Jr. accessible to his *Rolling Stone* readers by writing about the racecar driver's love of music.

You should point out how the title is aimed at *Rolling Stone* readers: Only the most casual reader would not connect Nirvana's Kurt Cobain as the Kurt in the title. The opening paragraphs relate how Earnhardt Jr.'s life changed once he heard Nirvana's song "Smells Like Teen Spirit" (paras. 1–7). Nirvana exposed him to other music, which further exposed him to ideas he had never considered before: "I never really was rebellious against my parents. I never really thought the government was fucked up. I never really paid much attention to the schools suckin'" (para. 7). As the class examines the essay, you should ask students to note how Touré manages to unify his many subjects by referring to music and, therefore, supporting his main idea that when Earnhardt Jr. heard Nirvana, he was "pulled from the good-ol'-boy path and rebaptized by rock & roll" (para. 3).

After noting Earnhardt Jr.'s love of music, Touré connects it with his place in stock-car racing: "Junior followed Dad into big-time stock-car racing, and now, in a sport filled with good ol' boys, he's known as the rock & roll driver" (para. 8). He observes how the

wealthy racecar driver is similar to the “MTV generation” readers of *Rolling Stone*: “A kid like you, maybe, who on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday does little or nothing—fixes up the house, plays paint ball and Sega NFL2K with the guys” (para. 8). In paragraphs 10 to 13, Touré writes about Earnhardt Jr.’s cars, often giving details one would expect to read in a car magazine: “He added a new transmission, a new aluminum-head Corvette engine, and a 2,500-rpm stall converter” (para. 11). Touré keeps music involved, though, by including Earnhardt Jr.’s thoughts on Dr. Dre and by describing how “the malevolent funk of Dr. Dre booms out the [car’s] window” (paras. 12–13).

A similar pattern can be seen throughout the rest of the essay. Paragraphs 14 to 26 show Junior on the racetrack but do not neglect music (para. 18). You might note how these paragraphs do not assume that the audience is familiar with racecar driving in the way that it is with Nirvana and Dr. Dre. For instance, readers of *Car & Driver* would not need the interior of a racecar described to them: “There is only one seat (roll bars are where the passenger seat would be), and that seat is form-fitted to Junior’s body like shrink-to-fit jeans” (para. 19). Touré describes Earnhardt Jr. interacting with his father—a legendary racecar driver—in paragraphs 27 to 37; these paragraphs set up the next section, which provides a brief history of stock-car racing and notes how Earnhardt Jr. is different from his father (paras. 38–45). As Touré notes, he is part of a new breed of drivers, representing “a titanic shift in the cultural direction of NASCAR” (para. 43). Touré quotes Junior on how NASCAR has changed its image: “Just look at the TV coverage. Ten years ago, when they’d go to break, it’d be some fiddle banjo-pickin’ music. And now it’s this jammin’ rock music” (para. 44).

In the rest of the essay Touré continues to incorporate music, but he does so less and less. You might ask students to consider why he might have done this. Is it because he has already made *Rolling Stone* readers interested in Earnhardt Jr. the racecar driver and does not need to present Earnhardt Jr. the music lover?

ADDITIONAL WRITING TOPICS

1. Put students in pairs, and ask each member to interview the other. Each student should come up with interview questions that aim to reveal different sides of the interviewee’s personality. You might discuss some possible questions as a class. Based upon the interview material, students should write two short essays on the interviewee, each for a distinct audience.
2. Ask students to write an expository essay about how music has changed their lives. They should describe themselves before and after the change.

3. Direct students to record the different subjects found in Touré's essay and to write a brief explanation as to how each could have been the main focus in another magazine for a different audience. For instance, the section about Earnhardt Jr.

and his friends arguing about racing movies would have been an integral part of an article in *Premiere* magazine about how people see their professions being portrayed in film.

CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER TEXTS

1. Touré inserts the subject of music into his essay on Earnhardt Jr. to meet the interests of *Rolling Stone* readers. You might ask students to turn back to Perrotta's *GQ* essay on Britney Spears. How does Perrotta meet the needs of his predominantly male audience?

2. Ask students to research an unfamiliar icon, past or present. You might suggest some icons or ask students to consider some they've heard of

but know very little about. Students could then write an essay or prepare a presentation that would introduce this icon to their classmates.

3. Assign students to research magazines for an essay similar to Touré's in how it presents an unfamiliar figure to its audience. The students can write a short essay that analyzes how the author presents certain aspects of the figure to meet the needs of the magazine's audience.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING, THINKING, AND WRITING

print

Persinger, Kathy. *Dale Earnhardt Jr.: Born to Race*.

Champaign: Sports Publishing LLC, 2001.

Touré. *The Portable Promised Land*. Boston: Little, Brown, 2002.

www web

www.dalejr.com/ Earnhardt Jr.'s official site with news, story archive, fan club, and merchandise.

Links for the selections in this chapter can be found at www.seeingandwriting.com.

David Butow, *Hollywood Walk of Fame, Los Angeles, September 30, 2001*

GENERATING CLASS DISCUSSION AND IN-CLASS WRITING

Butow's photograph shows a window display that features American objects and figures. Most of the objects are novelties—Elvis, Betty Boop, James Dean, the Three Stooges, a Route 66 sign, a tiny Statue of Liberty, a large golf ball. All of these objects surround the American flag at the center of the display. According to the sign above the display, the store offers passport photos. The items are small and offer a slice of Americana—ideal for a traveler about to go abroad.


You might begin discussion by asking students to form groups to examine the picture. Ask each group to note details about the display and to form inferences based upon the details. If the groups have difficulty with this exercise, you might have them look at the Seeing questions for more direction. When the groups finish examining the picture, they should report their findings to the class. As a class you can point out missed details or expand upon certain observations.

ADDITIONAL WRITING TOPICS

1. Ask students to write a description of a personal window display for themselves, filling the display with objects from their room. As each student writes the description, he or she should consider the following questions: Which objects would go in the display? Why would certain objects be left out? How would the items be arranged? What would the display say about the person? Students should write a four-digit code on the paper for anonymity (you might suggest the last digits of phone numbers).
2. After students have completed the first writing prompt, collect the descriptions and redistribute them. Ask each student to write a brief response—a paragraph or two—that infers personality traits from the personal window display. Collect the essays, again, read the codes, and return the essays to their owners. Then ask the students to discuss the inferences made about their window displays. If you joined the class in writing your own window display, you could read yours first.

CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER TEXTS

1. The readings in the chapter's Looking Closer section involve the uses and meanings of the American flag. Ask students to skim through the images of the flag at the end of the chapter. How is the flag being used in Butow's picture?
2. Ask students to look back at Camilo José Vergara's photographs that cover twenty-one years of the same Harlem storefronts (p. 150). If Butow had taken his photo twenty years earlier and twenty years later, how might it be different?

 Links for the selections in this chapter can be found at www.seeingandwriting.com.

Re: Searching the Web

Icons are prevalent in many areas of American life. Sites such as The Museum of Advertising Icons enable students to explore a variety of icons—in this case, many related to toys (see www.toymuseum.com/main.html). The Collector's Corner offers a section, for example, on “What Makes an Advertising Icon a Collectible?” and archives of icons ranging from the Jolly Green Giant to Big Boy and Tele-Tubbies (see www.toymuseum.com/info.html).

Ask students to explore the history of advertising icons at this web site. Direct them to examine the style of particular icons that they choose from different periods and to comment on the marketing strategies they observe in these examples. Students might want to determine which icons at present have the most value to collectors.

Students can complete the Re: Searching the Web exercises online at www.seeingandwriting.com. Additional tips and links are also available.

Looking Closer: The Stars and Stripes

GENERATING CLASS DISCUSSION AND IN-CLASS WRITING

This section of images and texts focuses exclusively on the American flag—its representation and the laws that govern its treatment. The flag is the legal symbol of our nation. As such, it has the potential to evoke strong patriotic (or unpatriotic) emotions. It is a more abstract and arbitrary type of icon than an image of Madonna or the sign for a restroom, though. In the latter cases there is a concrete referent that resem-

(text pages 523–25) **230**

bles the icon. In the case of the flag, however, the connection rests almost exclusively on a convention, or agreement, about what the stars and stripes represent.

You might begin discussion by asking students to freewrite about America and the American flag. After some students share their writing, ask them to examine the comments about America in Jesse Gordon's piece. As students read the following selections, have them consider how each is a product of its time.

Jesse Gordon, *What Is America?*

In each of the twenty-four pictures, a person holds a small American flag and answers the question "What is America?" The answers vary from "freedom" and "possibility" to "hot dogs" and "sex." You might ask students to consider how the respondents' answers might be influenced by their place of origin.

David Foster Wallace, *Wednesday*

This selection was written in reaction to the proliferation of American flags after the events of September 11. Wallace notes that more of a statement is made by not waving a flag. What might this statement be?

Justice William J. Brennan Jr., *Majority Opinion of the U.S. Supreme Court in Texas v. Johnson (1989)*

Justice Brennan asserts that on the basis of protection under the First Amendment—freedom of speech—Gregory Lee Johnson should not be convicted of desecrating a flag. A few of the main points of Brennan's argument are that (1) no one was hurt or injured, (2) there is no law protecting the flag specifically, and (3) the decision to overturn the ruling against Johnson is in fact "a reaffirmation of the principles of freedom and inclusiveness that the flag best reflects, and of the conviction that our toleration of criticism such as Johnson's is a sign and source of our strength" (para. 21).

Plateau Indian Bag

This representation of the American flag is a Native American one. On one side of the bag there is an image of a frontiersman; on the other is an Indian. Each figure is approximately the same size and is in the same position. Above each figure, resting on a shield of stars and stripes, are two identical crossed American flags. The symmetry of the flags suggests an equal balance between the frontiersman and the Indian.

Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist, *Dissenting Opinion in Texas v. Johnson (1989)*

In contrast to Justice Brennan, Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist asserts that the power of the symbol of the American flag constitutes a special case and that there-

fore “a governmental prohibition against flag burning in the way respondent Johnson did here” (para. 1) is justified. He disagrees with Justice Brennan’s claim that the flag’s value is strengthened by permitting its desecration in the name of free speech. Rehnquist argues, “in my considered judgment, sanctioning the public desecration of the flag will tarnish its value—both for those who cherish the ideas for which it waves and for those who desire to don the robes of martyrdom by burning it” (para. 14).

Matt Groening, *Pledging the Flag*

Groening’s cartoon calls attention to the pledge to the flag rather than to the flag itself. In this case, the cartoon figure rises for the morning salute to the flag (from a desk, apparently in school) and repeats malapropism after malapropism that vaguely and comically approximate words of the pledge. When the cartoon student is reprimanded by the teacher, he retorts with another well-known American saying, “It’s a free country.” These words, however, are not a malapropism. In this way, Groening demonstrates how the formal discourse of the Supreme Court is echoed in popular culture as well as in the conflict many communities face about the appropriateness of requiring students to repeat the Pledge of Allegiance.

Norman Rockwell, *Rosie the Riveter*

You might have to provide students with some background on Rosie the Riveter. During World War II, traditionally male occupations had to be filled by women. Rosie the Riveter embodies the working woman of World War II—strong, confident, and patriotic. You might ask students to describe the pose of Rosie in Rockwell’s image. Have them consider why women might have needed such a symbol during the war. You might point out a particularly telling part students might overlook—Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* crushed under Rosie’s foot.

Several Artists, *Section of Sunnyside, Queens*

This mural seems to have been made in response to the tragedy of September 11. The ruins of the World Trade Center can be seen in the background. However, the image of the flag raising at Iwo Jima is the focus. How does the famous image work here? Ask students to compare the images. Both depict a time of war, but the soldiers in this scene are firefighters and police officers. How do these artists envision the Iwo Jima image? Students might note that the mural offers an image of resilience by reminding us that America has been hurt before yet managed to prevail.