If you are an alert reader of chapter titles, you may be wondering about the title of this one. You knew that you were going to study rhetoric, but here, apparently, is a chapter that also seems to be about critical studies, whatever that may be.

There are at least two reasons for this chapter’s title. First, most of those who study the ways in which popular culture influences people are working within a general approach to scholarship known as critical studies (although not all of these people use the term rhetoric). We will look at what critical studies means in more detail a little later on. Second, what you do when you study the rhetoric of popular culture and then share your findings with others is known as criticism; you will end up writing or presenting criticism, or a critique, of the particular aspect of popular culture that you are studying. The last five chapters of this book, for instance, are examples of critical studies—of race relations in Milwaukee, gun shows, the movie *Groundhog Day*, steampunk, and “bad resurrections” in American life and culture.

This chapter is concerned with *how to think about rhetorical criticism*. It should not be taken as a set of instructions for how to march lockstep through a term paper. The different sections of this chapter, for instance, are not a “step 1, step 2” guide to how to write a critical study. Preparing an actual critical study is like writing an essay, and you should proceed as you would for writing any essay or report. What is more important is understanding how to go about critiquing popular culture so that you will have something to say in your critique. That is what this chapter will equip you to do.
TEXTS AS SITES OF STRUGGLE

Before we learn more about critiquing the rhetoric of popular culture, we need to clarify two basic principles that will underlie the critical methods explained in the rest of the book. These two principles together create a paradox about the nature of texts. First, we will learn that texts wield rhetorical influence because of the meanings they support. In other words, texts facilitate the creation of meanings that influence those who receive them. Second, we will learn that because texts can mean different things, they are often sites of struggle over meaning (and thus, over how and what or whom they will influence). Creation of a text may be the point of rhetorical struggle. The paradox is that a text is both a means to, and an outcome of, rhetorical struggle.

Texts Influence through Meanings

We noted earlier in this book that texts influence people to think and act in certain ways. That influence is the rhetorical dimension of texts. Here we need to be more specific about exactly what motivates or drives that influence: the meanings that texts encourage people to accept. We think or act in certain ways in response to texts because of the meanings the texts have for us and the meanings they urge us to attribute to our experience.

In the 2015–2016 National Football League season, it was discovered that footballs used and managed by the New England Patriots were underinflated, which allegedly gave an advantage to a team’s offense, and that meant to the Patriots’ stellar quarterback, Tom Brady. For months, arguments flew back and forth as to whether New England had intentionally deflated the balls, whether Brady knew about it, and so forth. Some argued that even if the balls were deflated, it didn’t matter. Others saw a consistent pattern in conduct by the Patriots and Brady. Eventually Brady was given a temporary suspension from play in the following season (2016–2017), which hardly hampered the Patriots at all. To this day, you can get a good argument started among sports fans by mentioning this incident. Why did all these texts create all these meanings, and why did they urge such meanings upon the public? Because choices and actions that the public might adopt usually depend on meaning. You will not think that Brady should be suspended unless cheating on football inflation means something criminal or at least wicked to you. And you will be moved to forgive the Patriots and Brady and move on if, to you, deflation simply means something that everybody does now and then.

Texts generate meanings about other things in the world. Texts also have meanings themselves; for example, Tom Brady himself is a text, or at least a complex artifact, with meaning. Whatever influence texts have on people’s thoughts and actions arises from what those texts mean to them. Faced with a row of otherwise indistinguishable jugs of motor oil in a hardware store, you will buy the oil that has the most favorable meanings. Of course, advertisers for oil, gasoline, soap, and other largely similar products spend a great deal of money trying to attach certain meanings to their products, since those goods...
are hard to distinguish on the basis of their own intrinsic values. So if you pick Quaker State over Pennzoil, it is because advertisers have succeeded in causing Quaker State to mean something to you that you prefer over whatever Pennzoil has come to mean.

**Texts Are Sites of Struggle over Meaning**

We now have to complicate the first principle we have learned by turning to the “struggle” side of the paradox of texts. As we learned in the first chapter, meaning is rarely simple. Instead, what a given text means, what a sign or artifact means as the result of a text’s persuasive influence, is often very complicated. That is because, especially in the case of symbolic meaning, meaning itself is rarely simple and straightforward. You can see this complexity in our example of Lance Armstrong. What he and his steroid use mean is being struggled over, even today, in the texts of popular culture. Within the last decade, we have seen a dramatic change in the meaning of Middle Eastern nations in the minds of Americans. These nations have “meant” either friend or foe as governments have come and gone, rebellions and terrorist insurgencies have occurred and been crushed, and relationships to the United States have varied. Until two young men from Chechnya were accused of the Boston Marathon bombing of 2013, most Americans likely had few or no meanings for Chechnya. A string of terrorist bombings in Paris, Brussels, and elsewhere by agents from Morocco, Syria, and elsewhere brought awareness of Middle Eastern countries perhaps not previously often thought of by Americans. Now the meanings many people have are likely to be negative.

The meaning of the popular music favored by young people has always been struggled over. From Bruno Mars to Insane Clown Posse, these artifacts have meant one thing to their fans and another thing to parents, police, and priests. In other words, people struggle over how to construct these different texts in ways that suit their own interests. Making a musical artist into one kind of text or another is therefore one goal of rhetorical struggle. These meanings are struggled over precisely because of the first principle we discussed: meanings are where the rhetorical power lies. The meaning of a president’s decision to send troops into action against a foreign power will have enormous payoff in terms of who runs the government after the next election. Therefore, the president’s political friends and enemies will spend a great deal of time and effort urging the public to adopt competing meanings of that action. Furthermore, the meanings of the very texts produced by those friends and enemies are also at stake. The whole business of so-called spin doctors, or public opinion shapers, is to struggle over the meanings of texts themselves so that texts can go on to influence further meanings. Scholars in the field of critical studies describe this state of affairs when they note that meanings, and therefore the texts that generate meanings, are *sites of struggle*. The idea is that struggles over power occur in the creation and reception of texts as much as (or more than) they occur at the ballot box, in the streets, or during revolutions.

Take a look at Image 3.1 toward the end of this chapter. In his 2016 campaign, candidate Donald Trump vowed to “make American great again.” Caps, shirts, and signs such as the hat Mr. Trump is wearing in the photo were common. Now, why would such a promise be a site of struggle? His supporters were in full agreement that American power and economic success had slipped during the Obama administration. Trump’s
opponents thought quite the opposite—that the nation was strong and successful under Obama. Many of these opponents thought the slogan was a coded reference to Obama’s race, as in those Trump supporters who wanted to “take back America.” Even seemingly simple slogans like this can be struggled over.

The critic of the rhetoric of popular culture (which is what you, as a reader of this book, are training to become) can play an important role in those struggles. Critics are meaning detectives; their role is to explain what texts mean. Rarely do good critics claim to explain the only possible meaning that a text could have. Instead, the best and richest analyses show ranges of meanings and may explain the ways in which certain texts are sites of struggle over meaning. Because meaning is the avenue through which texts wield influence, critics work directly to explain how it is that people are empowered or disempowered by the meanings of various texts.

An important tradition in the study of struggle in texts is what is often called the “Birmingham School” because it was originally grounded in the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham in England. A major theorist of this school was Stuart Hall. The Birmingham School arose in response to what is sometimes called the “Frankfurt School” and its leading scholars, such as Theodor Adorno or Herbert Marcuse. The Frankfurt School argued that popular culture was a means for empowered interests to control mass populations. The Birmingham School argued, against the Frankfurt School position, that ordinary people in their everyday lives often adapt texts to their own purposes. This may include combining texts in creative ways or appropriating texts for purposes not imagined by those who created the texts. Through

EXERCISE 3.1

To better understand why meaning is the source of the influence exerted by the rhetoric of popular culture, do this quick exercise on your own or in class on the instructions of your teacher.

Think about the last article of clothing that you bought because you really liked it and wanted to own it (that is, not some socks you bought in a rush because your other gray pair had too many holes). Do some self-examination and think about what that article of clothing means to you. Does it mean physical attractiveness? Elegance? Fun in the sun? List your own meanings.

Now back up from that article of clothing and consider the meanings you just listed. Think about other things you might do or items you might buy because of those meanings. For instance, if you bought a T-shirt because it meant summertime fun to you, what else will you buy or do to produce that same meaning? Sunglasses? An hour in a tanning booth? A Caribbean vacation? If you think about it, it is the meaning of these items or experiences that is primary; what you make of the tank top and the shades and the hour in the tanning booth—what these things mean to you—is what is going to stick with you.

Finally, think about the paradoxical nature of the various texts in this example. Some texts [such as ads for Caribbean cruises] urge you to accept certain meanings. But an article of clothing is a text that you yourself work over so as to make it support meanings that serve your interests.
such creative adaptation, the rhetorical demands of power may be resisted if not entirely avoided. A consistent theme in the writings of these scholars is that texts are sites of struggle and are rarely taken to mean only what those in power intend them to mean. Critical studies by members of this school, such as Hall, focus on the range and variety of different readings in which audiences engage.

To think about the rhetoric of popular culture, or the ways in which the texts and artifacts of popular culture influence us (along with our own participation in making meaning), we need to think about what popular culture means to people—the ways in which those meanings can be multiple and contradictory and how those meanings are struggled over. Because critics are meaning detectives, a rhetorical criticism is an exercise in showing the influences exerted by signs through their meanings. There are many methods (organized, systematic, and reliable ways of thinking) for thinking about popular culture already available to you. Let’s begin to consider such methods by examining the wide-ranging, loosely connected set of methods known as critical studies.

THREE CHARACTERISTICS OF CRITICAL STUDIES

A large number of people all around the world are studying exactly what you are learning about here (see, for example, S. K. Foss; Storey). Working as university professors, as columnists and commentators, or as independent writers of books and articles, these thinkers and scholars are studying the ways in which experiences of popular culture influence people. Their work follows many different approaches and is based on widely differing assumptions. But taken as a group, they constitute a loosely knit school of thought or way of thinking that has been called cultural studies or critical studies. For the sake of convenience, we will use the latter term.

Critical studies is not a professional or social club with its own set of rules. It is not a tightly knit, clearly defined, precisely delineated set of principles. Many of the theories and methods used by scholars in the field of critical studies are, in fact, at odds with one another on important issues. Critical studies overlaps considerably with other fields such as literary studies and film studies. But there are also some principles that link these theories and methods together and help to define critical studies as a school of thought. In this chapter, we will examine the principles that different branches of critical studies have in common, the theories and methods they share. In Chapters 4 and 5, we will look more closely at some differences among a few specific branches of critical studies. Now, however, we will learn that all branches of critical studies are (1) critical in attitude and in method, (2) concerned with power, and (3) interventionist.

The Critical Character

One thing that characterizes the different branches of critical studies is that they are all, unsurprisingly enough, critical. In this sense, the term critical refers to both (1) an attitude and (2) a method.
Attitude

The critical attitude is somewhat related to the everyday, colloquial sense of the term critical, though without its negative connotations. If you are being critical in this negative sense, you are disagreeing with, or finding fault with, something. In finding fault, you take apart or dissect another’s words and actions to show their true (and pernicious) meanings. Now, critical studies is not exclusively negative in this sense, but it does refuse to take things at face value. It adopts an attitude of suspicion, in other words, in which it assumes that things are often other than (or more than) they seem. Again, this attitude is not intended to be hostile or destructive; it simply means that people in critical studies want to know what else is going on besides the obvious.

Critical studies is always looking beneath the surface. For instance, a critical scholar watching an episode of one of the television Real Housewives series would assume that besides being a set of interrelated stories about some unfulfilled suburban women, the show has meanings and is influencing people in a number of ways. To give another example, it is not being critical to say that vampire shows, such as Let the Right One In, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, and From Dusk Till Dawn, are stories about the undead who go around biting people on the neck. Such a statement has not gone beyond what is obvious, or merely on the surface. It is being critical, however, to say that vampire movies help people deal with problems of conformity and industrialization (Brummett, “Burke’s Representative Anecdote”). An observation like that is not obvious, but it can be an interesting insight that the critic discovers and shares with readers. So, in sum, the critical scholar must be prepared to dig into texts, to think about the ways that people are being influenced as well as entertained, informed, and so forth by such texts.

Method

Critical studies is also a method, a way of asking certain kinds of questions about whatever is being studied. These questions are about meaning, complexity, and evaluation. A critical method wants to know about meaning. It asks, “What does a text, an experience, an object, an action, and so forth mean to different people?”

Rather than breaking them up into isolated parts, a critical method deals with the complexity of texts and experiences as they are actually experienced. Such a method asks, “What are some suggested meanings in the text, what are some of their influences or effects, and how do these influences interrelate with each other?”

Finally, a critical method seeks to evaluate that which it studies, to make some judgment about whether that object or experience’s meanings and influences are good or bad, desirable or undesirable, and so forth. The methods best suited to answering these kinds of questions are sometimes called qualitative methods (in contrast to quantitative methods that rely more heavily on experimental or survey research). Critical is probably a clearer term than qualitative, however, so we will return to that usage after the following discussion of the difference between qualitative and quantitative methods.
For an example of the difference between qualitative and quantitative approaches, let’s go back to the example of a critic studying one of the *Real Housewives* shows. Some questions that might be asked in relation to that show are: (1) Did that aspirin commercial halfway through last night’s episode increase sales of that particular product? (2) Does the show as a whole series affect how people understand gender roles? (3) How should we understand the ways in which the show and its characters are viewed in moral or ethical terms in an era when more and more people at least say they are concerned about morality and ethics?

Now think about the best ways to answer those questions. Questions 1 and 2 are not critical questions, by and large. They might best be answered by survey research; you could simply go out and ask people about their aspirin-buying habits or their views on gender. Or they might be answered by experimental manipulation of variables, in which you compare the aspirin-buying habits and gender views of a select group of the show’s viewers against a control group that does not view the show. Clearly, survey and experimental research (rather than simply sitting in a chair and musing about the answers) provide better ways to answer such questions. Both survey and experimental research are considered quantitative methods because many of their findings will be expressed using numbers (the numbers of those who buy more aspirin will be compared to the numbers of those who do not, and so forth).
Question 3 is a little different; it is more complex and might be answered in more than one way. You could answer it quantitatively, by surveying people as to their reactions, or by experimentally comparing those who saw the show with those who did not. But if you share the assumption with which we began this chapter—that an important dimension of influences and effects is meaning—then it is clear that these quantitative methods will not answer such a question adequately.

Question 3 becomes a critical question when you start to think about what ethics and morality in Real Housewives, or in American society as a whole, mean. This is a question that the critic must address. But asking an audience about meaning is usually not sufficient. You can ask people what the morality of the series means to them and get an answer, but that is not a sufficient and efficient way to determine meaning, for three important reasons.

First, meaning is complex. We have already discussed the idea that a given text or artifact means different things as it is considered within different contexts or cultural systems. Even within a single culture, a text will usually have many different meanings. We have noted how contradictions in meaning occur for many artifacts. Opposing meanings might be found in texts that are sites of struggle. All of this means that few people who are not accustomed to thinking about wide ranges of meaning will be able to say, comprehensively, what a text or artifact means. Texts usually have many more meanings than most people are able to see.

Second, people may not be able to articulate meanings. We learned in Chapter 2 that people participate in making meanings, but that does not mean that they can always say how they do so. A meaning detective might consider asking people to say what some text means. But some people are not very good at saying what a text means to them, even though it may mean a lot. This does not mean such people are unintelligent; it means that intelligence, and an ability to detect meanings, comes in many forms. Some meanings may be nonverbal, intuitive, or emotional, and therefore not the kind of thing that can easily be put into words. It may take a critic who is trained in talking about meaning to articulate what certain texts mean.

Third, meaning is sometimes beyond awareness; people may not consciously know what a particular text meant to them. They may not even be aware they are being influenced by certain texts. Participation in making meaning need not be done intentionally and with full awareness. Most people do not go through the kind of conscious introspection and probing of meaning that you are becoming acquainted with in reading this book. So, for many people, artifacts may have meanings of which they are unaware, and therefore meanings that they could not report.

Critical studies is qualitative because it is concerned with qualities more than quantities—and that is another way of saying that it is concerned with meanings. The critic’s job is to explore what a text or artifact means, including its different or contradictory meanings as well as the ways that meanings are struggled over, forced upon some people and rejected by others. As critics reveal the meanings of texts and artifacts, they are simultaneously doing two things:

1. Critics are explaining the rhetoric of popular culture, since, as we discussed above, what texts and artifacts mean are the ways in which they influence people.
2. Critics are showing how to experience life by demonstrating how texts and artifacts might be understood, the meanings that can be found in them. When we can see a different set of meanings in a conversation, or a film, or some music, we can experience that little part of life in a new way.

We have seen earlier in this book that people make sense of, or find meaning in, signs and artifacts as they experience them. To have an experience is to organize signs and artifacts and make them meaningful. For example, take two people watching a parade go by. One is filled with patriotic fervor at the flags and bands. The other is more cynical and not very patriotic, and every flag and band prompts her to grouse about the nation and its policies. These two people are finding very different meanings in the artifacts that go past them, and it would also be fair to say that they are constructing very different experiences for themselves.

The critic’s job is to demonstrate ways of experiencing parades by explaining the different ways that parades (or films, or sporting events) have meaning. But the critic does not have to step into the skins of these two people to show what a given parade definitely meant to a particular person. That would be impossible to do, since nobody can see completely into another’s mind. Northrop Frye (63) makes a useful distinction that explains what the critic does instead: The critic shows what people, in general, do, not what specific people did. The critic does not say, “Here is what that parade meant to Juan on that particular day.” Instead the critic says, “Here is one way that this parade might be experienced [might have meaning].” In doing so, the critic shows his or her reader how meanings might be constructed and how life might be experienced.

Concern over Power

The second main characteristic shared by most varieties of critical studies is one that you are already familiar with: a concern for power. Critical studies examines what power is or

**EXERCISE 3.3**

This exercise is designed to help you to understand the kinds of questions that are critical, that look into meaning, as opposed to the kinds of questions asked by other methods such as experimentation or survey research. You will find some questions listed below. For each question, determine (1) what methods, steps, or procedures would allow you to answer that question and (2) whether it (or some aspect of it) can be answered critically.

1. Why do some people think that the world is coming to an end?
2. What caused World War I?
3. What motivates Tyler Perry to make his films?
4. Does my car need a new battery?
5. Does television fairly represent all races in the United States?
6. Is television more violent than movies today?

*Note*: You may need to break some of these questions up into issues that can be dealt with critically and issues that cannot be. To answer some questions, you may have to count, compare, or observe something as well as apply critical thinking about meaning and evaluation.
what it has been understood to be, and how power is created, maintained, shared, lost, and acquired. Critical studies acknowledges that power is often secured through the more traditional routes of elections or physical force. But within critical studies there is also an awareness, stemming from the characteristic “suspicion” that we discussed earlier in this chapter, that power is seized and maintained in other, less obvious ways: in architecture, in classroom layouts in public schools, in social norms for proper behavior during movies and sporting events—in other words, in all the experiences of popular culture. As noted at the beginning of this book, the empowerment and disempowerment of whole groups of people occurs bit by bit, drop by drop, in the moment-to-moment experiences of popular culture. The rhetoric of popular culture, or the ways in which popular culture wields its influences, therefore has a lot do with power.

In thinking about empowerment and disempowerment, critical studies assumes that although they occur from moment to moment in the experiences of individuals, they follow a pattern set by groups. It is as large classes that people tend to be empowered or disempowered. Of course, individuals do things that empower or disempower them individually. Being elected to the U.S. Senate is personally empowering, immoderate consumption of alcohol is personally disempowering, and so forth. But critical studies assumes that most of the time, people experience power in ways that are similar to the experiences of other members of their groups. If a child is disempowered, according to critical studies, it is because nearly all children are disempowered as a group.

The major demographic categories that have most preoccupied scholars in critical studies have been those of gender, race, and economic class. There are other categories one might consider, including age, religion, sexual/affectional orientation, body type or shape, and degree of physical ability or disability. Actually, the list of such categories is potentially endless and may vary from one time or situation to another.

**Critical Interventionism**

We have learned that critical studies is critical in attitude and method and is concerned with power. A third and final characteristic is that it is *interventionist*. That is to say, critical studies is explicitly concerned with *intervening*, or getting involved in problems in order to change the world for the better. A critic wants to step into the lives of his or her readers and give them ways to see and experience the world differently.

The interventionist nature of critical studies is really an outgrowth of its critical attitude and method and its concern for power. We noted earlier that the field of critical studies attempts to show people how to experience life, or how to find life meaningful, in particular ways. That goal implies that people have choices among different ways to live their lives. If people have choices, then they can be influenced or taught to make sense of experience in certain ways as opposed to others. The critic’s job is to show how experience might be understood and in doing so to give people options for experiencing their lives. As a critic, you cannot help but be interventionist, because any time you show people different ways of doing things, you have intervened in their lives and changed them in some way.

For example, there are powerful social and political interests in our culture that for decades have encouraged consumption of food, fuel, consumer products, and other
goods. From television ads to government and industrial press releases, we are told that it is good for the economy for us to buy as many things as we can. We are constantly urged, for example, to strive to “keep up with the Joneses.”

From time to time, however, an ecological movement springs up that urges people to find different meanings in the process of buying and consuming. The current concern over global warming is just such a movement. People are encouraged to see acquisition of one product after another as unnecessary and harmful to the environment. For instance, people are being encouraged to question the wisdom of buying drinking water in disposable bottles. The ecologists who urge people to see consumption in this way are doing exactly what rhetorical critics do; they are saying, “Look at this plastic hamburger carton this new way, rather than that old way,” and “Buying a new gas-guzzling SUV every other year means a negative effect on the environment as much as it means a positive effect on the economy.”

Good critics do just that sort of thing. They show us how to think about and to find meaning in certain things, how to experience certain texts and artifacts; in so doing, they try to change us. It is almost always liberating to realize that you have more options in deciding how to experience life, to be able to see and understand experience in more than one way, to be able to find many meanings in a situation. For that reason, good rhetorical criticism is liberating. It liberates you, the critic, because it gives you a chance to probe into and develop some of these other potential ways of experiencing and understanding. And good rhetorical criticism liberates your readers and listeners as they share the new insights you have gained. Rhetorical criticism is always judged, therefore, in terms of the insights it provides into how people experience the influences of popular culture, and whether it expands the options people have for ways of experiencing that influence.

We are now ready to consider some of the ways critics go about thinking about the rhetoric of popular culture. This chapter will soon shift into a different mode, so be warned: The following sections do not describe steps to follow in a prescribed order, nor do they give directions for writing or presenting criticism. Rather, the actions described here are ways to think about how people experience life and what their experiences mean.

In thinking about such issues, critics have to make choices or decisions about what to study, what assumptions to make about what they study, and so on. Therefore, the rest of this chapter will lay out choices for you to make, but it will not tell you what to do. Critics’ choices about what to study, and how to think about those objects of study, will direct their attention in different ways, thus exposing different dimensions of meaning. Thinking carefully about these choices is especially important if the texts under consideration are sites of struggle over many possible meanings; in this case, critics must decide which of those meanings to focus on. In the next part of this chapter, we will examine some of the continua, or ranges, of choices that are available to critics.

One important thing rhetorical critics must consider is what the object of criticism will be. By object of criticism, we mean the experience that the critic wants to analyze. These objects of criticism are usually, but not always, texts rather than single signs or artifacts. The critic must identify a text and place it in context; we will refer to this identification and placement as positioning the text. Obviously, a first step in positioning a text is to find, or identify, a text that you would like to study.
FINDING A TEXT

A fundamental choice in thinking about a rhetorical criticism is that of selecting a text. You will recall from the first two chapters of this book that a text is a set of signs that work together to influence people. Another way to think of a text would be to look for a set of signs that are taken together as creating an interrelated set of meanings. It is important for you to find a text that will be exciting for you to analyze, a text that you will be able to say something about, and a text for which you have some new insights. There are two sources of texts that you should consider.

First, consider your own experience as a source of texts. What have you experienced recently, what has happened to you, what have you seen or heard, that interests you? Have you seen a film or a television show, or read a blog, that “turned on” your critical attitude, for instance—one in which you thought there was something going on beyond the obvious? Can you point to some complex experience, such as going to a wedding or a commencement ceremony, that might usefully be analyzed as a text? Have any of your recent experiences seemed to have something to do with power? Could you point to some magazine article or blog that you recently read that worked to empower or disempower people within its own small space of influence? Finally, have you recently experienced a text that excited your interventionist impulses or your desire to get involved somehow (for example, did you see a movie that you thought was racist in subtle ways, so that you wanted to expose that racism)? These are questions that you might ask in relation to yourself and your own experiences of texts. Remember to look widely for different kinds of texts; we will look more closely at a range of possible choices in a moment.

A second source for finding a text is theory. This term in this context will need some explaining. A critical theory is an abstract statement about how people construct meaningful experiences. In contrast, a criticism (or critical study) is an illustration, or modeling, of that theoretical statement. A theory explains what people do in general, how they make sense of their experiences for the most part. A critical study is an application of a theory—it says, “That generalization can be seen at work here, within this limited frame of space and time.”

For example, the critical study that is reprinted in this volume as Chapter 9 began with a theory that said, in a nutshell: Steampunk is a critical and artistic movement that uses images of Victorian England’s industrial and imperial past to critique current American and European empire (Brummett, Clockwork Rhetoric). This is a theoretical statement designed to explain why steampunk appears the way it does in culture and why so many respond to it. Notice that this theoretical statement is about how people create experience; it makes an assertion about what people do to enjoy and participate in an
aesthetic and cultural movement. Notice that the theory is also abstract or general; that is, it talks about how costumes, cosplay, and published images work in general, not about a particular top hat with a stovepipe on it.

The actual critical study that was based on that theory goes to illustrate, or model, that abstract statement with specific examples from steampunk watches and from the movie Brazil. The study showed that steampunk manages the power that comes with empire, either by jumping scale up and putting people in a context of overwhelming and stultifying power, or by jumping scale down and creating simulations that seem to put that power within the grasp, literally, of the public. Such strategies include providing a great many highly detailed examples, for instance.

A reader of that study should have been instructed by the study in how to use the theory to understand other experiences, in other contexts. After reading such a study, a reader might forever after be alert to strategies used in other aesthetic and cultural movements, or even in other examples of steampunk more richly, noticing and understanding a little bit more of this aspect of life. A reader might go to a cosplay convention with greater understanding of what goes on when people dress in the trappings of industry or of empire.

Too often, what you learn in one class is never called upon in other classes, especially across disciplines. But in using theory as a source in selecting a text for critical analysis, your own reading and prior education become valuable resources. In psychology, sociology, anthropology, English, and many other kinds of classes, you have doubtless read critical theories (even if the authors you read did not always refer to their works by that name). For example, some theories describe, in general terms, how people behave in businesses or other organizations; such theories might be illustrated with case studies of what happened at IBM corporate headquarters in New York or at a Westinghouse plant in Indiana. Some theories describe how people in general understand poems and will be illustrated by analysis of a particular poem. Some theories describe the steps that people

**EXERCISE 3.4**

Think about theories you have read in other classes. If you need a reminder, look at the books for those classes and find “theory” in the table of contents or the index. Describe a theory that you have encountered that describes in general what people do, how people behave, how people experience life or find it meaningful. Summarize that theory in a few sentences. When you first read the theory, was it illustrated with a critical study? Did an example come with it? How would knowing that particular theory equip you to understand other experiences beyond the example provided in that particular critical study?

In other words, suppose you read a theory in a sociology class that made some general statements about the behavior of people in nursing homes. The theory may have come with a critical application, such as studying the behavior of people in a nursing home in a New Jersey town. Does knowing that theory allow you to make interesting connections to the ways people behave in other institutions, such as public schools, summer camps, or the armed forces?
go through in grieving for the dead and will be illustrated by concrete examples of the experiences of particular mourners.

Theories are a useful source for texts because they tell you how to look for a text. For instance, you may never have thought of the stages of a personal relationship as a “text.” But after reading Knapp and Vangelisti (Interpersonal Communication), you might well be able to see a unifying thread linking several events that have occurred in a relationship that you have had, and that unifying thread might constitute a text. Knapp argues that relationships develop or deteriorate in clear stages; his identification of those stages provides a useful system of categories for analysis. In this way, Knapp's theory of relationship stages calls your attention to a unity of influence among signs, or a text, that you might otherwise not have been fully aware of.

Whether you find a text based on your own experience alone or one that is suggested to you by theory, you will have some important choices to make about how to identify and understand the text. Critical scholars do not always agree about how to make these choices; we will examine some of those differences among scholars in Chapters 4 and 5. Here, however, we will examine some of the ranges of choices that are available to you. We will refer to each range of choices as a continuum.

First, you must choose the type of text you want to study: discrete or diffuse. As we will see, a given set of signs could be seen as either discrete or diffuse, depending on the critic’s intentions. This choice may be represented on a continuum as follows:

The First Continuum: Type of Text

discrete – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – diffuse

The terms discrete and diffuse should be familiar to you from Chapters 1 and 2. A discrete text is one with clear boundaries in time and space. A diffuse text is one with a perimeter or boundary that is not so clear, one that is mixed up with other signs. Whether a text is discrete or diffuse depends on how it is experienced, understood, or used. The critic must decide how he or she wants an audience to experience, understand, or use a text. A set of signs that could be seen as making up a discrete text from one perspective might also be seen as only part of a wider, more diffuse text in someone else’s experience.

We are used to choosing to see some texts as discrete and some as diffuse just as a matter of habit, but good critics always consider the full range of choices available to them. The texts in Images 3.2 through 3.32 (pages XXX–XXX) are usually taken as discrete texts; it is clear where they begin and end, and it is usually assumed that they will not spill over into the rest of the magazine or website where they began. But a critic could choose to see each image as only one component of a more diffuse text, such as a text comprising a dozen ads of a similar type or a diffuse text consisting of all the issues of a magazine.

The start of school might be understood as a diffuse text, including such signs and artifacts as paying tuition, meeting new friends, finding classrooms, buying books, buying clothes, going to parties and receptions, and so forth. But the critic could choose to take only the first meeting of one class as a more discrete text in its own right. On the other hand, your sister’s wedding could be seen as a text with a rather discrete, concentrated core of signs made up of the actual ceremony and the reception afterward. But a critic
may choose to include in the text some signs involved with the preparation for, and aftermath of, the wedding, thus making it more diffuse.

It may help you in settling on a text to identify where it falls on this first continuum of discrete to diffuse. What are the consequences of choosing a more discrete or more diffuse type of text? Let’s consider discrete texts first. Discrete texts are usually easier to identify because the signs that make up the text are close together in time and space; you do not have to “hunt” for them. The signs that make up the discrete text of the film Fences, for example, are all right there on the screen. Because the signs are together in time and space, people are generally accustomed to identifying such a text as a text. Both the sources and the receivers of messages that are discrete texts can count on that agreement; the people who made the large poster advertisement on the side of a city bus, for instance, know that you are likely to perceive and understand it as a text in and of itself. You do not have to work very hard to convince people that the texts in Images 3.2 through 3.32, the television show Monday Night Football, and a billboard are texts, each one a discrete thing or event. In dealing with discrete texts, because people are already aware of your text as a text, the insights you have to offer will usually be concentrated on particular details of the text. Your criticism will point to new ways to experience that text and others like it; it will call our attention to meanings that can be found in the text.

Diffuse texts are harder to identify. In fact, very diffuse texts may be impossible to identify completely—because they are so diffuse. Your task may be to indicate most of a set of signs that seem to be contributing meanings toward the same influences without being able to identify every sign that could conceivably be part of the set. So, if your diffuse text is the start of school, you may have to give an indication of what the text is by naming several of the signs it comprises rather than every conceivable one. There are many discrete texts within the very wide range of “hip-hop,” for instance, but hip-hop itself can be thought of as a diffuse text made up of music, clothing, celebrities, gestures, and so forth—such a huge text that to analyze it one would need to specify limits from the start.

Because you have to work harder to pull together a diffuse text, people generally are less likely to identify as a text whatever you are describing as one. When texts are diffuse, people may not be consciously aware of the unity of influence going on among the several signs scattered here and there. Everyone knows that people prepare their income taxes, for instance, but not everyone may be accustomed to seeing that activity as a unity, to seeing all the steps and experiences surrounding that preparation (over weeks or months, at home and in accountants’ offices) as a set or a text. Because seeing the
preparation of income taxes as a text may be something new for people, the insights offered by your critique are more likely to be both about the text and about the existence of the text itself. You have something interesting to say about the meanings and influences of the signs that make up the experience of preparing income taxes, but you also have something interesting to say in presenting that experience to us as a text.

We have identified a text as a set of signs that work together toward the same influences, which means toward the same meanings. Identifying meanings is central to finding a text. What makes a group of signs “hang together” as a text is the fact that you can say that they work together to offer those meanings. But who determines what meanings are? And how do we know what these meanings are? As a critic, you also have choices in determining the sources of meanings that a text might have; these choices are represented on our second continuum, which illustrates the range of possible sources of meanings:

**The Second Continuum: Sources of Meanings**

```
| broad  |  | narrow |
```

One of the basic principles that we discussed at the beginning of this chapter is that meaning is usually complex and many-layered and may even be self-contradictory. For those reasons, it is rarely the case that a critic can completely explain the meaning of a given text. Instead, critics must narrow their focus to some of the more interesting, influential, or controversial meanings. This second continuum can help to guide a critic in making the choice of which meanings to study. This continuum reminds the critic that some meanings are widely held; we will call these broad meanings. Other meanings are held by only a few people, or arise only in particular circumstances; we will call these narrow meanings. Of course, it is important to remember that we are dealing with a continuum rather than a sharp distinction here; for most texts, there is a whole range of meanings that are more or less widely shared in the middle of the continuum.

For instance, what do the book and film trilogy *The Lord of the Rings* mean? A critic who sets out to study that movie must choose which meanings to focus on, because they cannot all be analyzed at once. Widely agreed upon meanings would include simply what the film’s basic plot or storyline is. It might be widely agreed upon as a depiction of conflicts among different nations or societies, for instance, and attitudes toward global politics or war in general might shape some of the most widely shared meanings. On the other hand, there are more narrowly held meanings that might be a fruitful object of analysis as well. Since global conflict and war are constantly recurring, people in different eras and locations might attribute narrower meanings to *The Lord of the Rings*. People living during the Cold War of the 1950s–1980s might see the trilogy as meaning the struggle between communism and capitalism. In the early years of the twenty-first century, the trilogy may be read as meaning the global conflict between Western, secular, industrialized societies and fundamentalist, Islamic societies. Affluent people living in suburbs may find meanings in the trilogy that parallel their fears of the movement of drugs, violence, gangs, and poverty out of the city and into their neighborhoods.
What are the consequences of the critic’s choice of meanings to analyze? On the one hand, more widely shared meanings are often more important meanings just because they are so common. It may be important to show what most people think a text means, because meaning underlies how texts influence people. More widely shared meanings are also often easier to demonstrate in a critical analysis; they encounter less resistance because they are already understood by many people. However, because such widely shared meanings are already understood by most people, explaining them further may not go very far toward changing the thinking of those who read or hear the critical analysis. People are less likely to have their eyes and ears opened to a wider range of meaning if they are exposed only to meanings they already know.

Less widely shared meanings at the narrow end of the continuum do have the potential to widen the horizons of people who may never have thought of finding such meanings in a text. For instance, several university and professional sports teams have for years had American Indian mascots: the Cleveland Indians, the Atlanta Braves, the Washington Redskins, the Florida State Seminoles, and so on. The most widely shared meanings for the texts of these mascots were fairly innocuous; they simply “meant” the teams, and occasionally they might have served as reminders of the history of a location and so forth. But critics have begun to point out that a narrower meaning, first held by Indians themselves, is much less innocent. For many Indians, those mascots have “meant” racial insults and a cavalier and patronizing treatment of their cultural traditions. Through choosing to reveal and analyze these narrower meanings, critics have succeeded in persuading some teams (for example, those at Stanford University and Marquette University) to replace their mascots (at Stanford, from the Indians to the Cardinals). That critical effort was not without difficulty; many people claimed to see no derisive meanings in the mascots. In fact, one consequence of choosing to focus on less widely shared meanings is that they are harder to demonstrate to a wide audience of people. But the payoff in terms of changing potentially harmful or insulting meanings that can be attributed to some texts and signs can be greater.

Paying attention to the full range of choices available to the critic, from narrow to broad, is important in revealing texts as sites of struggle. Only by showing what Indian mascots mean (narrowly) to the Menominee or Ojibwa in contrast to what they mean (broadly) to many non-Indian sports fans could critics show how those meanings are in conflict, and how Indian mascots are therefore sites of struggle. This continuum reminds the critic of a full range of possible meanings, and thus of the likelihood that those meanings will be in conflict with each other in many texts.
DEFINING A CONTEXT

Once a text has been found, the next choice the critic makes in positioning the text is to place it within a context. Texts do not occur, and they are not “read,” in a vacuum. An important part of being rhetorical is existing in relation to some problem or situation. In other words, signs influence people for a purpose, to some end, in some context. Questions arise, then, of what causes people to construct texts, as well as who is influenced by the texts, why they are influenced, and under what circumstances. Answering these questions entails identifying a context for your text. Here, too, you as a critic have a choice, which is displayed in our third continuum:

The Third Continuum: Choice of Context

original – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – – new

Every text appears or is constructed during some first moment or range of moments in time and space. We may think of that moment (or moments) as the text’s original context. The people who first gathered to hear Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address occupied a moment of time and space that was the original context for that speech; a slightly wider, but still original, context was the nation that would learn of the speech within days by way of newspapers. The “first” use of a text may also, paradoxically, occur across many different moments of time and space. This textbook, for instance, is a text that appears in its original context every time a student picks it up to read it for the first time. The context is made up of the room or library in which it is read, the reading assignment, and so forth. This context will occur (or so the author and publisher hope) thousands of times a year, but it is nevertheless the original context each time. Original contexts are defined by the intentions of those who make or use texts as well as by the “real-life” contingencies of when the texts, in fact, first appeared.

EXERCISE 3.5

One of the clearest examples of signs with both broad and narrower meanings is the cowboy. Look at the advertisement for the “Keep Austin Weird 5k,” Image 3.3. Were a broad, national audience to see this ad, they might attribute meanings of fun and excitement to it due to the bright colors. The walking figure seems to be an image of an old country-and-western musician or perhaps a “hippie.” The whole thing carries meanings of a laid-back, fun event. Residents of Austin will have narrower and more specific meanings that they read into the text. “Keep Austin Weird” is a slogan widely found around town on bumper stickers and on shirts. Austinites will know that this means south, not north, Austin, which is certainly a narrow rather than broad meaning. Icons specific to Austin in the ad will resonate narrowly with Austinites: beloved stores such as the local Amy’s Ice Creams, armadillos, or images of the bats that live under the Ann W. Richards Congress Avenue Bridge. Readers over a certain age will interpret the striding figure as being in the style of R. Crumb’s cartoons from the 1960s, which celebrated the hippie culture. In sum, there are several levels of meaning here, from broad and nationally recognizable to meanings specific to narrow segments of the Austin population itself.
On the other end of the continuum, texts are often moved or appropriated into new contexts, ones that are different from those in which they originally appeared. In the 1980 film *The Gods Must Be Crazy*, an “ordinary” soda bottle falls from its original context, an airplane, into the Kalahari Desert (a new context), where it is taken to be a message from the gods by the Bushmen who find it there. Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address is now studied in public schools as an example of beautiful language, succinct and efficient wording, and great ideas; the original context of commemorating a battlefield has been largely lost to the sixth grader who is being tested (that is, encounters the text in a new context) on the address next week. Of course, changing the context of a text also changes many of its meanings, though usually not all of them.

The critic has a choice that he or she must make about the context in which to position the text. The text may be considered in its original context, as it was first experienced by people. For instance, a critic might study the meanings that the *Three Stooges* film shorts had for their original audiences in the 1930s and 1940s or their remake as a feature film in 2012. Or, there are two senses in which the text may be considered within a new context.

First, the critic might examine ways in which people, acting on their own initiative or through happenstance, experience texts in a new context. For example, the critic might think about how the meanings of *Three Stooges* shorts change as they appear in the 2000s, as television reruns or on compact discs.

Second, the critic might propose a new context for consideration by the readers of the criticism, even if the text has not actually been experienced by these readers in that context. By suggesting that a text be seen in an entirely new context of the critic’s proposing, the critic can often fulfill the important function of showing people more of the ways in which life is made meaningful. For instance, the critic might suggest to her or his audience that they think about the *Three Stooges* reruns as political commentary on the present presidential administration. Clearly, this is nothing like the original context. But if the reader begins to think about how those short features might be understood (or found meaningful) as being about the president, new insights about politics and our present situation might be opened up to that reader. The placement of the Stooges, or any text, in a radically new context like this should not be done capriciously or simply for fun. The new context and text should “fit,” and the new placement should teach us more about what both text and context can mean.

This kind of “updating” of context actually happens. In the 1960s, posters of the 1930s and 1940s comedian W. C. Fields were widely popular in college dorm rooms. Fields played characters that were pompous and pretentious but also bumbling and incompetent. In many ways, he seemed to address widely held beliefs that high officials who led the United States into the Vietnam War were just as bumbling as Fields’s characters. Of course, that was hardly the original context or interpretation for his films, but they seemed to fit the 1960s in new ways.

In a more serious vein, it would be interesting and insightful for a critic to ask readers to think about Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address as being about the ongoing conflicts among nations around the Persian Gulf, especially involving Iran, Israel, Iraq—the desert battlefields of their recurring wars, or those in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and those who fall in those conflicts. The critic can, in a sense, ask Lincoln to speak across the years and miles to a new context. We might learn a great deal about what war means to Americans and
how Americans experience war by placing that text in this new context. Correspondingly, we learn more about the text of the speech itself by observing the additional dimensions of meaning that are highlighted in a new context. For many people, the meaning of the speech’s original purpose (dedicating a battlefield) has been lost; meaning might be restored to the speech by repositioning it in relation to a new battlefield.

Choosing to place a text at one end or the other of the continuum, or somewhere in between, entails certain consequences. To consider a text within its original context, the critic must do some historical work first to discover what the source of the text (the writer, speaker, film producers, and the like) and the original audiences were thinking about. If we are to think about the film *Gone with the Wind* as a rhetorical text in its original context, then we will have to look at the concerns of American moviegoers in 1939 and examine the meanings that the film may have had in that context. It may be illuminating, for instance, to think about the characters and events of the film in light of growing fears over war and destruction in Europe and Japan, and to ask how the film influenced the audience through the meanings it offered given the context of the outbreak of World War II.

A second consequence of placing a text within its original context is that historical accuracy becomes an important criterion for judging a criticism. Whether a criticism faithfully reports the meanings a text had in its original context is an important consideration when that context is where the critic places the text. Today’s readers of the criticism will learn about how to experience and to find meanings in life if they can understand the patterns of meaning that were followed at different times in the past.

If the critic chooses to place a text in a new context, especially if it is a context entirely of the critic’s choosing, different consequences result. The context will be suggested more by the critic and the critic’s insights than by historical research. Historical accuracy becomes much less of an issue, and instead, the quality of the critic’s insight becomes a criterion for judging the criticism. What does it teach us, one might ask, to think of the *Three Stooges* films as being about today’s political context? Clearly, accuracy is not the issue in that case, as no one is claiming that those films either addressed, or intended to address, today’s politics. What matters is whether or not there are insights to be gained; unless placement of a text in a new context is enlightening, it becomes just a game that is best avoided by serious critics.

**EXERCISE 3.6**

Examine Image 3.4, the advertisement for the Movado watch. In the pages of *GQ Magazine*, its original context, it carries meanings of style. It is surrounded by pages of suggestions on what to wear, how to decorate one’s home, how to present an image. But note how simple this image is, how adaptable it would be to many different circumstances. An engineer might study it in appreciation of the machinelike aesthetics. Someone could expand it photographically and make a poster that seems like abstract art for an apartment. You could imagine this image working in a film about mechanization and the power of industry, as a huge and towering icon of machinery. The image is adaptable to many different contexts due to its simplicity.
The last issue that we will consider in thinking about how to position a text is the relationship between text and context and how that relationship works. There is no single way to view that relationship; the choices that are available to you are explained in the fourth continuum:

**The Fourth Continuum: Text–Context Relationship**

reactive ——————————————————————————————————— proactive

Sometimes, texts may be analyzed for the ways in which they react to a context, which is the left side of the continuum. People have a clear perception that certain challenges, problems, or possibilities exist (creating a context), and that texts are devised so as to react to that context. People may be out of work, racial tensions may be high in a certain locale, perhaps there is a hole in the ozone layer, and so forth. Under such circumstances, texts are designed or are used to react to these perceptions of a preexisting difficulty. For instance, during the 2004 presidential elections, the film *Fahrenheit 9/11* appeared and attempted to influence many people to vote against President Bush, to assign negative meanings to his reactions to terrorism. A presidential election is a clearly perceived existing context for most people, many of whom choose reactive texts in the forms of lapel pins, bumper stickers, and yard signs that react to that context and urge certain meanings upon others. Similarly, at the end of 2012, the film *Zero Dark Thirty* appeared, and it offered what many took to be a generally positive view of the value of torture in fighting terrorism. Both these films may be studied as on the reactive end of this continuum.

At the other end of the continuum is the possibility that texts might be analyzed for the ways in which they are proactive—that is, the ways in which they create their own contexts. That is not to say that these texts appear spontaneously or for no reason. Rather, the most important or interesting context within which to consider them is the context that they create themselves. Much advertising works this way. For example, many products, such as the cooking gadgets, mini-choppers, hot plates, wiener steamers, and so forth advertised on late-night television, are simply not needed; they respond to no real-life problems. Instead, they create a context of need for themselves, proactively.

Politics often generates texts that are most interesting for the contexts they create. In the 2016 presidential election, candidate Donald J. Trump conducted a campaign that was, by all accounts and as acknowledged on both sides, unconventional. In short order, Mr., soon to be President, Trump himself became the issue. Other candidates and news shows alike began talking about him far more than about his policies and intentions. In most previous campaigns, the nation would have been preoccupied with a candidate’s stance on defense, taxes, and so forth. Mr. Trump created a context in which the talk was about him.

Most texts in and of themselves are both reactive and proactive, just as a debater’s speech both responds to an earlier statement and in turn becomes the basis for the opponent’s reply. A critic must choose which sort of text–context relationship to feature in his or her analysis. But an analysis might address a mixture of both kinds of relationships (a point in the middle of the continuum).

For example, racial conflict is usually a preexisting context of some level of importance in our country, although it varies in terms of immediacy and the amount of attention
As a result of that choice, the critic must look either backward or forward—back to a context to which a text or texts react, or forward to determine new contexts that texts create.

**Intertextuality: When the Context Is Another Text**

One of the most interesting, and commonly occurring, textual strategies that depend on manipulation of context is *intertextuality*. Intertextuality occurs when one text references, makes use of, or actually includes part or all of another text. Any new song paid to it. Since the late 1980s, a series of films, such as *Twelve Years a Slave, Hidden Figures, Mississippi Masala, Crash, Remember the Titans, Friday Night Lights, Do the Right Thing, Mississippi Burning, Driving Miss Daisy, Jungle Fever, Malcolm X, Django Unchanged*, and *Falling Down*, have both responded to that perennial context and ignited a new and intensified context of racial concerns. Each newly revived context has generated more widespread public discussion of racial issues. The consequences of choosing whether to identify texts as reactive or proactive to their contexts are important. As a result of that choice, the critic must look either backward or forward—back to a context to which a text or texts react, or forward to determine new contexts that texts create.

**EXERCISE 3.7**

One of the clearest ways in which texts are proactive is when they sell the public new technologies. Think of the last time you went to buy a new cellular telephone and discovered that the store was full of appeals to buy the latest and most expensive model, which was full of all kinds of features you never knew existed before entering the store. So it is for most technology. Leisure products often work in the same way. Look at Images 3.5 and 3.6. Both of them are urging the purchase of leisure-time products such as enormous outdoor kitchens, barbecue grills, and patio furniture. If you think about it, few readers are likely to turn to a magazine to find out where to buy such things. The context of desire for these leisure products may not exist prior to seeing the ads. Instead, people are leafing through a magazine and are given a context of desire for these products; they are invited to imagine what their own scrubby backyards might look like decorated in these ways. A desire for products that did not exist before has now come into being as a result of these texts.

Sometimes texts are proactive in that they introduce an issue to the reader, an issue of which the reader was not previously aware. Image 3.7 is a startling example of this in that many people, especially in the United States, may not know that diamonds are sometimes mined by brutal warlords who control parts of Africa, and that the warlords enforce their authority through shocking means such as cutting off the hands of those who disagree with them. This proactive image may persuade some audiences to look into the connection between diamonds and violence and to change their purchasing behaviors.
that has within it a hook from another, older song is an example of intertextuality. A new T-shirt with an old, recognizable image of a celebrity on it is a kind of intertextuality. Likewise, if someone’s outfit seen today includes one element of “hippie” style from the 1960s, such as bell-bottom jeans, the outfit has that amount of intertextuality. The new, container text then becomes the context for the older partial or complete text. In this way, meanings associated with the older text become incorporated into the new text, contributing to its rhetorical impact. Intertextuality can be a powerful and efficient way to create rhetorical impact because it makes use of packages of meaning that already exist in the older text. To some extent, nearly all use of signs is intertextual, since most signs occurred earlier as parts of other texts. Every sentence we speak is intertextual, using as it does words that bring with them layers of meaning from their previous uses. But intertextuality in the sense we are using it appropriates rather specific texts from the past so as to use particular meanings associated with those texts.

Intertextuality can sneak into discourse unannounced. For President Obama’s first inauguration, the Reverend Joseph Lowery was asked to give the opening prayer. Perhaps not everyone would recognize the opening of this prayer as some of the lyrics of “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” traditionally and historically called the “Negro National Anthem.” But for those who did recognize the lyrics, the prayer was a significant gesture placing Obama’s presidency in a historical context of struggle and triumph.

One of the clearest examples of intertextuality in popular culture is *sampling*, a musical technique found especially in hip-hop. This has been a strategy used in hip-hop for years. Coolio’s “Gangsta’s Paradise” samples heavily from, of course, Stevie Wonder’s “Pastime Paradise.” Wonder’s critique of materialism and living only for entertainment provided a stock of meanings ready-made for Coolio’s critique of his own urban rapper’s culture. Mase’s “Welcome Back” begins with a sample of the theme song from the old television series *Welcome Back, Kotter*. That old comedy featured some tough but lovable characters attending an urban high school. Mase’s intertextual adoption of the theme song borrowed the lighthearted, comic meanings of the original show, which were rhetorically useful in his attempt to update and repair his earlier “bad boy” image from his *Harlem World* album. Nelly’s album *Suit* has a song, “Nobody Knows,” that intertextually incorporates an old gospel song, “I Ain’t No Ways Tired.” Nelly sings of his own history of misbehavior over and around the gospel song so as to make his journey toward stability and prosperity borrow the uplifting moral sentiments of the older song. In that way, he leavens his own “bad boy” image with meanings given by an old religious song, perhaps from the churchgoing days of his youth in Austin, Texas (sorry, St. Loo, he’s from the Lone Star State). Intertextuality occurs in many more texts and on visual and verbal dimensions as well. Critics need to be on the lookout for it, as it imports meaning into a text by making it the new context for an older text.

We have discussed ways to find a text and a context. This has been a process of both discovering a text and positioning it so that we can think about it more usefully—think, that is, about what the text is, what it is trying to do, and the things to which it responds. In every case, the critic must make choices about the most interesting questions to ask about texts in context. Now we are ready to think more carefully about the text itself and about how its component signs work together; for that, we must go further “into” the text.
"INSIDE" THE TEXT

How can we think about what a text is doing? How do texts urge meanings on people, and how do people accept, reject, or struggle over those meanings? We will build our discussion of the dimensions of the "inside" of texts around three categories: (1) direct tactics, (2) implied strategies, and (3) structures. These three categories can be usefully displayed as ranging across our fifth, and last, continuum:

The Fifth Continuum: From Surface to Deep Reading

direct tactics – – – – – – – – – – – – implied strategies – – – – – – – – – – – – structures

A word of explanation regarding this continuum is in order. This continuum, like the others, represents choices that a critic can make in thinking about critiquing a text. This fifth continuum represents whether, or how far, a critic wishes to go beyond studying the explicit and straightforward appeals that a text makes into an analysis of more indirect and less obvious appeals.

Most texts make certain explicit appeals, which we will call direct tactics. Texts also have implied strategies, which are subtler and not always consciously intended to be perceived; these implied strategies are often the implications of some of the direct tactics that are used.

EXERCISE 3.8

In this exercise, we examine intertextuality. Note how one text has swallowed up part of another text. Some interesting examples of intertextuality may be found in Images 3.2, 3.3, and 3.8. In Image 3.2, note that the part of any text that has the look of a music player—compact disks, portable media players, and so forth—is the image of “play” in the middle with an arrow pointing to the right, and double arrows to the left and right to signal fast reverse or forward. These meanings connected to cool technologies of entertainment are swallowed up into the new text that is the design of the Play fragrance bottle. It is interesting that these controls on a CD, DVD, or portable media player are themselves intertextual echoes of the older technology of magnetic tape players, in which “play” pointed to the right because the tape really did move from left to right, very quickly when in rewind or fast forward. More recent digital technologies are, of course, not moving to the left or to the right (disks are actually read from the inside out, for instance), but the old tape technology was swallowed up intertextually into the new digital technologies to make them more easily understood.

In Image 3.3, the walking figure is intertextual, since images very much like this appeared in old R. Crumb drawings from the 1960s and 1970s. The “hippie” meanings of those old cartoons are transferred to this text through this intertextuality.

In Image 3.8, a photo of LeBron James grimacing in athletic exertion has been inserted as an editorial commentary into a photo of a baby. Readers are meant to merge what they know of crying babies with what they know about charges regarding James’s behavior when his NBA team does not perform as well as he would like.
And finally, any text is put together or organized in certain ways, and its various parts have relationships among themselves. People experiencing the text may not be aware of these deep patterns. These parts and their relationships make up the text’s *structure*. Direct tactics, implied strategies, and structures are the sources or storehouses of meaning in a text. Which of these levels of appeals will the critic focus on? That is the choice offered by the continuum. The choice is a continuum because, although we have identified three levels at which texts appeal, the levels are not radically distinct; rather, they merge into each other.

### Direct Tactics

Direct tactics reveal the system of meanings, the consciousness, offered by a text most explicitly. A direct tactic is any straightforward request or prompting for you to think or behave in a certain way. It is often accompanied by a reason or rationale for you to think or act as urged. If someone says to you, “Order the steak; the lobster isn’t fresh,” it is clear that a direct attempt to influence you is being made. The direct tactics used in the rhetoric of popular culture are, in many ways, closest to the reasoned arguments of expositional texts that we studied in Chapter 1. Explicit claims, reasons given in support of the claims, visual images with a clear message in terms of what you are being asked to do or not to do—these are all direct tactics that you might find in popular culture.

Our fifth continuum represents a range of appeals that the critic could choose to analyze. Of all the possible choices on the continuum, direct tactics are probably the easiest appeals to find within a text. Many advertisements are full of direct tactics. In Image 3.9, the list of technological advantages of the BMW diesel may be considered a direct tactic in that it explicitly lays out for a reader why this is the best car to buy. A hip-hop song urging people to fight oppression or a rock-and-roll song telling people to stay off drugs is also using direct tactics.

But not all texts have direct tactics, whereas all texts do at least have implied strategies and structures. In fact, some texts seem almost devoid of direct tactics. We have all seen our share of ads that make no explicit claim upon us, ads that comprise nothing but a brand or company name and an ambiguous visual image. Many soft drink commercials show only the product and images of happy people having fun. Similarly, a street gang’s preferred hat style is usually devoid of direct tactics, yet it conveys a powerful message.

Image 3.4, the advertisement for the Movado watch, is nearly devoid of direct tactics. It is heavily visual, creating a feeling of desirability in the reader almost exclusively through the careful choice and arrangement of visual signs. Nowhere in that text is there any direct appeal to go buy the product, nor are there any explicit reasons given to do so.

Because direct tactics are on the surface of the text, the critic who chooses to focus on them should first simply note what the appeals are, make a list of them, and identify what is being urged and why. The critic should think about what support or reasons are given for the direct appeals, remembering that such support might be visual as well as verbal or expositional. Finally, the critic should think about the most likely audience for the appeals and then assess the likelihood of the appeals succeeding with that group.
Implied Strategies

If critics are not satisfied with examining direct tactics alone (or if few, if any, such direct tactics exist), other choices are available to them. They can examine the implications of the signs, the relationships among them, how they are arranged, and so forth. It may be a little difficult to understand exactly what critics are looking for in examining implied strategies and how such strategies differ from direct tactics. Perhaps a hypothetical example will help. Suppose you had a friend who was working at a bank. Suppose that every time you met that friend, his conversation was punctuated by statements such as, “Embezzling really isn’t such a bad thing”; “Gee, I think they probably don’t catch embezzlers very often, especially if, you know, they don’t really take very much”; and “I’ve often thought that really smart people could get away with taking their employer’s money.”

The “direct tactics,” so to speak, in the text of your friend’s conversation are rather straightforward; these are simple statements about the subject of embezzling. But if you considered only direct tactics, you would probably miss something else that is going on with your friend. Most people would probably realize that the implications of your friend’s words are far-reaching; they might mean that your friend is swindling the bank where he works (or at least considering doing so), perhaps that he is even in serious trouble. You would arrive at that conclusion because your friend is saying things you would not ordinarily expect and repeating certain things more than is quite normal for conversation. Your friend may not even be aware of his conversational patterns. There are oddities and peculiarities, interesting things that call attention to themselves, in what your friend is saying. So, acting as an everyday rhetorical critic in this situation, most of us would probably do an informal critique of this friend’s text and either warn him sternly or turn him in to the police.

Every text has similar interesting quirks and peculiarities—things missing or things too much in evidence—that convey meanings in and of themselves. A critic must choose...
to focus on these implied strategies. Following the work of rhetorical theorist Kenneth Burke, we will look at three categories of implied strategies, each of which suggests a question that you can ask about texts: (1) association (What goes with what?), (2) implication (What leads to what?), and (3) conflict or absence (What is against what?). These categories overlap somewhat, as we will see. The three questions accompanying them are the basis for how a critic probes a text for implied strategies.

**Association: What Goes with What?** In answering this question, the critic considers the signs that are linked together in a text. Such linkage may occur when signs are placed in the same place or within the same image so that they seem to go together naturally. The linkage may also occur when signs appear together repeatedly; every time one sign occurs, the other sign occurs as well. For signs that are linked in such ways, the meanings that would usually be assigned to one sign are transferred to the other, and vice versa. Linking signs becomes a strategy of borrowing meaning, of moving signification from one sign to another. Celebrity endorsements are a very common strategy using association. A shoe is shown together with a celebrity in a series of advertisements in hopes that the

**EXERCISE 3.10**

Which images a text puts together with which other images can tell us a lot about the meanings it is trying to create. In Image 3.16, notice that Stella Artois and related products of Belgian beer are not paired with burgers and fries, as we might see in so many ads for American beer. It is put together with fine cuisine, as pictured in the four images just above the beers. This creates meanings of luxury and classiness for the beer; we are meant to think it is not for chugging with hot dogs at a game. Similarly, “Mexican cuisine” is a complex term and could be read to mean anything from simple street food to a local taco joint to fine cuisine. Image 3.11 shows images of downtown to transfer meanings of urban sophistication to the type of Mexican cuisine offered by the Iron Cactus. Image 3.12 supplements its direct appeal to ecological values by associating its product with images of nature and of recycled glass, such that “green” meanings are transferred to its product. Image 3.13 pairs an image of a kitchen with that of a fine wine being poured into a tasting glass, borrowing the meanings of fine living and luxury from the wine for its kitchen furnishings. A very common use of association is celebrity endorsement. In Image 3.2, the pairing of celebrity Justin Timberlake with Play cologne transfers positive meanings the reader may have for him to the cologne, which may be new to most readers. Image 3.17 associates the Bentley automobile, long a symbol of luxury, with the Breitling watch, which may be somewhat less familiar as a luxury item. Find other texts that share meanings back and forth between associated signs in this way. Image 3.18 puts the label of a clothing brand into the rubble of a factory building in Bangladesh that collapsed because of unsafe working conditions; clearly the image wants us to associate that brand with its undesirable labor practices.
positive meanings of the celebrity will “rub off” on the shoe. A candidate for public office will want to appear with a popular president in campaign events so that the president’s positive meanings will slide over to the candidate.

In another example, the maniacal killer Michael Myers in the *Halloween* movies, particularly the Rob Zombie series, is consistently associated with darkness and mist or fog. In the brief scenes shot from Meyers’s perspective, his own vision is foggy and blurred. All the mayhem is done at night; one wonders what he does all day when the sun is out. Think about how meanings of dark and obscured vision are transferred to Myers’s character by this repeated association.

**Implication: What Leads to What?** Often, several of the elements of a text will suggest, or lead to, some other element. There are two kinds of signs that do this: keystone signs and transformations. Sometimes one sign or kind of sign, a keystone sign, assumes centrality in a text. A keystone is the stone in the middle of an arch over a doorway; it keeps the whole archway up. Without the keystone, the structure would fall. In a text, the keystone sign is key to the overall meaning of the text. That element may not even be the most frequently recurring sign in the text so long as the other signs consistently imply, suggest, or refer to it. Sometimes a keystone sign is the sign that catches the most attention in a text. If a keystone sign were removed from the text, the whole thing would lose its current meaning. The text will not blow a trumpet and announce to you that this or that sign has more importance than others; instead, many of the “roads” in the text lead to or imply that sign. If it is visual, the eye will be drawn toward it consistently. If it is verbal, it will be the word carrying the most powerful meanings. We call that a keystone sign within a text, and close examination of that sign can tell us a lot about what the text in general means.

**EXERCISE 3.11**

In this exercise, we look for keystone signs. Image 3.19, the advertisement for D&G, is an arresting image. The conjunction of interesting-looking young men in lipstick, with ripped jeans, old band and military uniforms, and a luxurious old-fashioned library, certainly invites critical analysis. I suggest that one sign in the text is a keystone sign because it pulls everything else into place: beneath the jacket of the man in the middle can be seen, just barely, a shirt with the image of Oscar Wilde on it. Wilde was famous as a late-nineteenth-century aesthete and dandy and is remembered as an early celebrity who openly displayed his homosexuality. That one small part of the whole image pulls everything into place. One can imagine these young men as the very sorts of fellows with whom Wilde hung out. The over-the-top clothing and decorations, the suggestion of “queer” sexual identities, the air of decadent luxury in the room, all come into alignment when we have the image of Wilde as a keystone sign to pull them together. In Image 3.20, we see color by itself as a keystone sign. The distinctive color of the Bombay Sapphire bottle label (although the gin itself is, of course, clear) is infused throughout the image of the ad. It is a cool, quiet, sophisticated yet not boring color and becomes the keystone for the meanings that the ad wants to assign to the product. Image 3.21 is a public service announcement attempting to increase condom usage. The condom in its package is a keystone sign; the eye is drawn to it. The sign is central to the meaning of the text.
For instance, Rick Grimes and Darryl Dixon seem to be keystone signs in the television show *The Walking Dead*. The show’s attitude and many of its plot developments lead to one or the other, and the plot keeps returning to them as key figures. The two very different characters provide much of the dramatic tension in the series; between them, they can be taken as an indication of the tone of the show and why it is so popular. In many hip-hop videos, the constant reappearance of guns, cars, attractive women, or ornate male jewelry is a keystone sign; whichever is the key sign for a particular text lends its meanings to the whole of the text.

Another way in which one sign leads to another is by way of *transformation*, or the “standing in” of one sign for another (this transformation can be detected in the iconic, indexical, and symbolic meanings of signs, discussed in Chapter 2). A transformation sign is not what it seems to be; you perceive it and you know that it is standing in for something else. Sometimes the text gives you clear hints as to what you are looking at; sometimes time and care in reading the text are needed so as to figure out what you are looking at.

A widely popular theme in recent movies is the sign of the furiously angry and destructive infected person or “zombie.” Someone gets bitten by a zombie and turns into one directly. Films such as *28 Days Later*, *28 Weeks Later*, *I Am Legend*, *Quarantine*, and *Rec* all feature viruses that instantly make the infected rabidly violent. Huge crowds of screaming, furious zombies come pouring over the hill, raging for your blood. The critic might gain some insight by asking, what is this infection, and what are the furiously angry infected, *really*? What are they standing in for? Is it fear of recently emergent communicable diseases such as HIV or varying forms of influenza? Is it fear of strangers? Is it fear of our own unbridled passions overwhelming us? Since the angry zombie is so frequently found today, it is likely that this recurring image is a transformation of some concern or fear we have across cultures. On a related note, Michael Myers’s character in the long history of *Halloween* movies seems clearly to be standing in for rage itself. He is the embodiment of raging angry, killing for the sake of killing. Image 3.21 is a public service announcement attempting to increase condom sales and usage by transforming the condom into an “accessory,” a piece of fashion.

In thinking about the meaning of these transformation signs within the text, the critic should ask why one sign was chosen to stand in for another in the first place, and what meanings are conveyed by such a transformation. For instance, a recurring feature of the *Matrix* trilogy of movies is an enormous Desert Eagle .50AE pistol. It appears to be the standard sidearm for the black-suited bad guys, the “enforcers” of the Matrix. The gun is of a size and clumsiness to make it an unlikely “real-life” carry weapon. It is very difficult to shoot and control. So the question arises, what was such a gun doing in the films—why was that gun used and not a more realistic one? A critic might propose that the massive gun was really standing in for an intense fear of government or police power.
on the audience’s part, expressed in a gun that looked awesome and destructive enough to be a transformation of that fear. In the movie *Fences*, most of the film’s action leads to the father figure, played by Denzel Washington. It is interesting to ask what the character is standing in for in the film. Various critics have suggested that his character is a sign of the resilience of African-Americans, especially men, in the face of adversity. Others might argue that he is a sign of the tensions involved in patriarchy within any community, but especially that of African-Americans.

**Conflict or Absence: What Is against What?**

The critic who asks this question looks for ways in which the text keeps certain signs apart. Texts do this in three ways. First, texts may omit certain signs. When a reader feels this absence, noting that something that should be there is not, a conflict is created between expectations and the actual text. To locate such omitted signs, we ask what the text did not say and compare that with what it did say. We look for what is missing, especially for signs that should be there but are not.

Second, texts may show certain signs in conflict. Within such texts, we see explicit pairings of concepts in opposition to each other. Sometimes the text specifically places signs in opposition to each other. Sometimes those oppositions are in the form of contradictions, such as including signs that would not typically go with the other signs that they appear with in the text. Note that in texts of this kind, signs that are usually against or apart from each other have been paired; this unusual combination prompts us to think about the meanings that the odd pairing generates.

Third, texts may put together signs that are not ordinarily found together. The match-up of those signs startles or jars us; it is from the potential conflict of signs that the unexpected pairing (and thus, pairing of unexpected meanings) gains rhetorical strength. Complex meanings can be created by these “mismatches.” In Image 3.24, both President Trump and Prime Minister Trudeau of Canada are seen looking at Trump’s hand, extended in Trudeau’s direction. What does the photo say, or more to the point, what can be read into it about this interaction? Is Trudeau snubbing Trump? Is Trump explaining matters to Trudeau?

Almost any night of ordinary television viewing will yield many examples of “what is against what” in the first sense of certain signs that are omitted. For example, women are often omitted as players or commentators from professional sports broadcasts, especially from the more popular broadcasts featuring male-dominated sports such as NFL football. Thus, over time the meaning that “women are not athletic” is built up. Consider also the
relative absence of people with physical disabilities on your television screen. Think about the relatively low representation in film or television of people who will be perceived to be gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender. When texts rarely link people of varying sexual identities with everyday roles such as store clerks, business office workers, plumbers, and so forth, such texts serve to further a false image of people with those sexual identities as uninvolved in the everyday life of our country.

So, if 90 percent of the successful professionals in the United States (such as doctors and lawyers) are not seen to be African-American, Asian, or Hispanic (as television shows would seem to indicate), what does that seem to say about realistic career aspirations for people of color? As the public increasingly depends on television for entertainment—indeed, for a description of reality—what meanings does such an underrepresentation of people of color convey to the public? What effect might those meanings have on the members of those populations themselves?

One major absence on television is a realistic concern about money. On most television programs, you will notice that when people are finished eating in restaurants, they simply get up and leave. In reality, however, people in restaurants divide the bill among themselves, argue over who ate what, ponder the tip, and so forth. When the people on television programs do pay for something (such as when they are getting out of a cab), it is done with a hurried grab for whatever is in their purses or pockets. In reality, of course, people count their bills carefully, rub them to make sure two are not stuck together, wait for change, and so forth.

Television’s silence about money becomes most obvious in commercials. Commercials are rarely specific about what anything costs; in fact, most of the time the fact that a product costs anything at all is simply not mentioned. There seems to be an assumption that everyone can afford anything; all sorts of products are depicted as being affordable by people from all walks of life.

The second way in which signs are placed against other signs, the depiction of conflict, is clear and straightforward. Dramatic television series almost always depict certain groups as in conflict. Terrorists are nearly always presented as Middle Eastern (specifically Arab or Palestinian) and are shown in conflict with Europeans or Americans. The popularity of Saudi or Iraqi “bad guys” on television has grown as the plausibility of Russian enemies (a former TV favorite) slips; spies on television shows now come from the Middle East instead of from the former Soviet Union. Such oppositions, or conflicts, urge upon the television audience a particular view of how the world order is structured.

The unexpected conjunction of signs that would usually be set apart from or against each other is also fairly common. In any election year, for example, we see powerful and wealthy politicians don overalls and flannel shirts to show up at county fairs to eat fried chicken and corn on the cob. Wealthy senators tend not to eat corn dogs on a daily basis. The president rarely goes to 4-H shows in Duluth, Minnesota; thus, when he does attend such a show, the intended meaning of that unexpected conjunction becomes interesting and noteworthy. Television commercials often show cheap and ordinary products in contexts of great wealth. That kind of unexpected pairing may create in ordinary people the (false) sense that they can live just as well as the rich folks.

We have been learning about three implied strategies: (1) association (What goes with what?), (2) implication (What leads to what?), and (3) conflict or absence (What is against
The third kind of conflict or absence is when a surprising or unusual conjunction of signs occurs. We do not ordinarily associate young children with jail. In Image 3.27, the stark juxtaposition between the innocence of a young girl and the harsh symbolism of the iron bars produces an especially arresting image. Image 3.28 is an interesting example of a surprising and unexpected mix of signs not usually found together. This is an advertisement for high-end furniture. What meanings are created by putting some of that furniture, with a lavishly set table and two fashionable diners, on a raft in the middle of a river with a bare-chested boatman? Why is this unexpected conjunction created? Image 3.29 offers an image of a beautiful peacock merged with a turtle. Does this unusual mix of signs create the claimed meaning of “stylish and safe”? Sometimes an unusual mix of signs is risky; might this ad also transfer the turtle’s meanings of “slow” and “unresponsive” to the Kia (surely not a result intended by the advertiser)? Note that Image 3.30 puts together the unlikely ideas of the moon and growing radishes. This unusual conjunction encourages certain ways of thinking about what American Indian colleges do for their students—think about what those meanings might be.

**EXERCISE 3.13**

In this exercise, we look for the three kinds of conflict/absence in signs. First, let us look at texts that create explicit conflicts or oppositions. Image 3.14, which we have already examined, draws an explicit contrast (a sort of conflict) between the dense urban environment of New York in the top photo and the elephants of South Africa in the bottom photo. The contrast is meant to highlight the attractiveness of the vacation being offered. This contrast would be appealing to those who want to get away from such an urban environment. Image 3.25 draws a quick and clear contrast between “stinking” and Old Spice products, offering their deodorants as ways to overcome problems of body odor. Does Image 3.25 create other contrasts or conflicts, and if so, why?

Second, let us consider how a text might have something missing, unexpectedly. In Image 3.26, some of the diners in the restaurant are perfectly visible and clear; others are blurs. Why are some of the figures “missing” or absent visually? Although taking photographs in low-light conditions can cause blurring, the magazine could have corrected for that problem with flash, or by taking the photo during the day. Think about what meanings are created by the blurred figures, why some of the diners are only partially there.

what?). It may have already become clear to you that these categories sometimes overlap or blend into one another. One thing might “go with” another thing by “leading” to it, for instance, and being “against” one thing will often imply being “with” another thing. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, the categories and questions presented in this chapter are ways to think about the rhetoric of popular culture, and such thinking about real experiences rarely falls into tidy categories. Returning to our fifth continuum, we will now turn to the third choice critics make once “inside” texts: whether to analyze those texts’ **structures**.

**Structures**

When a critic chooses to analyze a text’s structure, he or she is dealing with the pattern, the form, the bare bones or organization of that text. Recall that we are considering choices, on the fifth continuum, from surface to deep reading. With structures, we have arrived at the
level of form or pattern. Here we do not ask what is said or shown in the rhetoric of popular culture but rather what forms or patterns we can discern beneath the things that are said and shown. At this end of the continuum, signs and texts are examined to discover the most fundamental patterns that organize them and the broad categories to which their elements belong. There are two concepts that a critic might choose to focus on that have to do with structures: narrative and subject positions.

**Narrative:** A number of scholars have suggested that texts can be usefully studied by thinking of them as narratives, or stories (see Aden; Fisher, “Narration,” “Narrative Paradigm”; Jameson). This is obviously true for texts that do in fact tell a story, as most films do, for instance. But clearly, a number of texts (perhaps most of them) are not narratives or stories on the surface. So what can these scholars mean by suggesting a narrative approach to the criticism of these nonnarrative texts?

They mean that critics can treat these texts as if they were narratives. For texts that are not narratives on the surface, this means that the deeper form or structure of the texts should be analyzed, because it is at that deeper, formal level that the characteristics of narrative will be found. What does the critic look for in examining a text for its narrative qualities?

The essence of all narrative is form, pattern, or structure. The phrase “the proud African warrior” is only the germ or nub of a story because it does not flow forward; it suggests but does not follow through on any pattern. But “The proud African warrior looked out across the grasslands as he set out on his quest” is already patterned, in two ways. First, it follows a syntagmatic pattern. A **syntagm** is a chain, something that extends itself in a line. We can think of syntagmatic patterns as horizontal, as moving in time and space. That kind of movement is what narratives do; a plot is nothing but a pattern chaining out horizontally in time and space, a series of expectations that arise and are either met or frustrated. The appeal of syntagmatic form is the appeal of “what comes next.” If you watch a movie in great excitement as to how it will turn out, then the film is appealing to you through its syntagmatic form. Our sentence about “the proud African warrior” asks us to start imagining that warrior as being on a journey, in pursuit of some noble goal, and so we imagine what will come next. We might imagine what that goal is, foresee dangers, and so forth. These expected developments will be revealed to us (or not) as the story moves on.

A second kind of pattern that this sentence follows is called **paradigmatic**. In contrast to syntagmatic structure, paradigmatic structure is vertical; it looks at structures or patterns derived by comparing and contrasting a given sign or text with other signs or
texts that are like it. We already know that our African warrior is in a quest story; thus, his story can be compared to similar quest stories: medieval knights in search of the Holy Grail, astronauts going to the moon, and so on. Much of what this African warrior means comes from that sort of implied comparison. If you like quest stories, if you like that sort of form, then you will be persuaded by the quest story to pay attention, to follow the text.

In a baseball game, to take another example, what develops when first Smith goes up to bat, then Jones, then Brown, will follow a syntagmatic pattern; events will follow each other in a forward-moving narrative sequence. If it’s the bottom of the ninth with the score tied and bases loaded, “what happens next,” or the appeal of syntagmatic form, is great. But paradigmatically, when a given batter is up, we might compare that batter’s statistics to those of other batters to see how this batter’s performance fits into the pattern of other hitters. That second kind of pattern is paradigmatic; we are considering the paradigm, or category, of batters. The relationship between syntagmatic and paradigmatic forms is illustrated in Table 3.1.

There are really two levels of paradigmatic form, and one of them we have already examined in considering direct tactics and implied strategies. When we took a given sign and asked what it went with or went against, we were thinking paradigmatically. A second level of paradigmatic form is the level of structure. We can identify the flow, or pattern, of a given text syntagmatically. But we can also take that pattern as a unified whole and move vertically, to comparing and contrasting it with the patterns underlying other texts so as to construct a paradigm. For instance, one can examine any television newscast syntagmatically to identify the pattern that is followed: headline story, remote broadcast from a reporter, next news story, personal interest story, the weather, and so on. But we can also compare the entire pattern of a particular station’s news broadcast paradigmatically with those of other stations in an effort to identify the overall pattern or structure that tends to underlie all newscasts. Often, this construction of a paradigm or vertical form is also referred to as the construction of a genre.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 3.1</th>
<th>Syntagmatic and Paradigmatic Forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paradigmatic Comparisons</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Smith did in the last game</td>
<td>What Jones did in the last game</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Smith did last time up in this game</td>
<td>What Jones did last time up in this game</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Smith Grounds Out →</strong></td>
<td><strong>Jones Hits A Double →</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Rivera (of the opposing team) did last time up</td>
<td>What Johnson (of the opposing team) did last time up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What the leadoff batter did in that movie you saw last weekend</td>
<td>What the second batter did in that movie you saw last weekend</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Syntagmatic Flow →
Identification of form or structure entails asking the sorts of questions that we might ask of good stories:

1. Is the pattern cohesive, and if not, why not? What influence or meaning occurs when the pattern is broken? Humor is often the intended result of deliberate disruptions in narrative patterns that seemed to be following the accustomed groove; examples of such humorous disruptions can be seen in many comedic television shows such as *Saturday Night Live* and *Family Guy*.

2. Is the pattern recognizable? What other texts seem to follow the same pattern, and what does their presence in that genre, group, or paradigm tell us about the meanings and influences of particular texts? A number of observers have noted, for instance, that one of the strengths of former president Barack Obama as a communicator is that even when speaking on great state occasions, he seemed to be speaking within the form of a casual conversation; people in the mass audience felt as if he were connecting with them personally.

### Subject Positions

The Marxist scholar Louis Althusser (*Lening and Philosophy*) and others (e.g., Brummett and Bowers; Hall) have argued that texts ask those who read them to be certain kinds of subjects. To be a certain kind of subject is to take on a sort of role or character, one that allows you to make sense of the text. But repeatedly assuming certain subject positions may mean that the positions become who you are. These theorists argue that rather than having any single, stable, easily located identity, we move from one subject position to another throughout our lives. In a sense, then, the power that a text has over you has a lot to do with what kinds of subject positions it encourages (or forces) you to inhabit. Because we develop our ways of thinking by regularly taking up certain subject positions, they imply a consciousness, which, as we learned before, is a system of meanings linked to group identification. Thus, there is a patriarchal subject position from which texts of male dominance make sense. Some texts may call for a feminist subject position that entails the adoption of a feminist consciousness, on the other hand.

Whether or not you agree with such a claim, an interesting question that can be asked of texts is, “Who was this text made for—who would fit into the role of audience for this text most easily?” Note that a subject position is not a character in the text itself. Instead, a subject position is who the text encourages you to be as you, the reader or audience, experience that text. Rarely will a text explicitly announce its preferred subject position for the members of its audience. Instead, a subject position, like narrative, is part of the structure of a text. You can think of a preferred subject position as the missing perspective, the point of view, required for the text to make sense. A preferred subject position is very often a means of control that favors groups already in power in a society. For instance, almost any “real-life crime” television show such as *Cops* will call for a preferred subject position of deference to authority, the assumption that the police are always right, and a sense that justice always prevails. It’s simply easier to watch such shows if you can watch them from a preferred position that views them that way. Those ways of thinking also empower current arrangements of power and authority in society.
We have already examined the magazine ads at the end of this chapter in terms of direct tactics and implied strategies. Still, or unmoving, visual images such as those found in magazines can also be examined syntagmatically, but such examination can be difficult and usually involves placing oneself in the position of the reader as he or she “moves through” the ad. Yet, very often a “still” image will suggest a story. Image 3.31 says, “It’s not what we do or where we go, it’s who we are.” Does that suggest a story about the church advertised? Is there anything else in this advertisement that suggests a narrative that would be appealing to someone looking for a place of worship? If you look back at Image 3.19, think about stories suggested by the still photo of these men in this context. How did they come to be there? Will they hang around this study posing all day? What will happen next—and how might such a narrative create positive meanings for the product?

Now we will depart from the magazine ad to consider some films, books, and television shows. This is one form, pattern, or structure that might underlie a text:

1. People occupy a distinct space
2. that they are not free to leave;
3. hostile external forces attempt to attack or infiltrate the space, and
4. they must be repelled or subverted.

Examine, on your own or in class, all of the films, books, and television shows from the following list with which you are familiar. You will find that all share the structure described in items a through d above. For each film, book, or TV show, identify the surface features (actual events, characters, and so on) that match the elements of structure listed in a through d above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Film, TV Show, or Book</th>
<th>a</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>c</th>
<th>d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Old, classic Western TV shows</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Blair Witch movies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movies Rec and Quarantine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Village</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 Days/Weeks Later</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any Star Trek movie/episode</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Am Legend</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(your own example)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What can you learn about the meanings and influences of these texts of popular culture by examining their structures? How does clarifying the “bare bones” of texts, both syntagmatically and paradigmatically, help you to understand the ways that those texts might influence people?

A different structure underlies the following texts. This time you supply the description of the structure underlying all of these texts. Then identify the surface features in each that match the elements of the structure you come up with.

1. The Christ story
2. Dead Man Walking
3. Powder
4. Phenomenon
5. The Brother from Another Planet
6. Edward Scissorhands
7. E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial
You can also think of some subject positions as *subversive stances*, positions taken deliberately by the reader in opposition to the “preferred” subject position suggested most strongly by the text. For instance, almost without exception, old “cowboys and Indians” movies strongly encourage a white, law-and-order-based, pro-establishment subject position—in other words, one that will root for the cowboys. It is easier to see such films from this perspective; the films are structured toward that end. But one can also root for the Indians by refusing that subject position and taking an alternative, or subversive, one. In this way, subject positions can often become sites of struggle.

Recently popular television “makeover shows,” such as *How Do I Look?*, *Love, Lust or Run*, or *Style by Jury*, clearly encourage a preferred subject position that values style, aesthetics, and a passion for consumption. To make sense of that show, one must think of appearance as vitally important and to think that appearance depends on constant shopping. But one could just as well watch the show by taking a subversive subject position, mocking the smug hosts, sneering at “must-have” styles that will be outdated tomorrow, and sympathizing with the poor guests who are made to throw out their comfortable if frumpy clothing.

Another instance of the possibility of a subversive subject position can be seen in relation to the long-running, now-syndicated television show *Touched by an Angel*. Clearly, the viewer of that show is intended to see the film from a spiritual, even explicitly Christian, perspective, one in sympathy with the “angels” who appear as regular characters. We are encouraged to feel uplifted by the ways in which these angels intervene in the daily lives of the troubled people they encounter; it is easier to take such a sympathetic subject position that delights in miracles and divine revelations. But it is also possible to see the film from the subversive perspective of a nonspiritual or non-Christian person. Such a viewer might “fight back” against the halos and auras of light, the miracles, and the divine interventions portrayed on the show and instead see them as ridiculous, as things to be made fun of. Another subversive subject position at another extreme, which your author has observed in some people, is that of a strongly Christian viewer who takes offense at attempts to portray the divine on television and at ordinary actors claiming (even in a script) that they are angels.

Now, the show itself appears to be trying very hard not to allow you these alternative positions; by the end of each episode, the creators of the series have pulled out all the stops to make you see the angelic characters as good and wonderful and to feel assured that God’s in His universe. But because every text has a preferred subject position in which it is trying to place you, it is always possible, at least in principle, to find an alternative, subversive subject position. Doing so may yield some interesting insights into that text.

We have been learning optional ways to think about texts once you, as a rhetorical critic, have positioned them. The kinds of close and careful examinations of texts that we have demonstrated in this chapter have provided choices in considering *direct tactics*, *implied strategies*, and *structures*. Only one more set of choices is necessary to consider before you can begin to produce the actual rhetorical criticism. We will now consider different ways to step back out of the text and to think about how the meanings you have discovered do social and political work.
EXERCISE 3.15

This exercise is in two parts. First, go through the advertisements we have been using to identify preferred and subversive subject positions. We have already considered some of these issues earlier in our examination of the idea of context, or audience, for the images in Images 3.1 through 3.32 (pages XXX–XXX). Recall that we asked who the ads seemed to be speaking to, but we also considered subversive, or oppositional, stances that an audience might take. For instance, it seems clear that the Breitling watch ad in 3.17 calls for a preferred subject position that enjoys luxury, that sees the Bentley and the Breitling as going together, that values high-end consumption. How might a subversive position take a more skeptical, critical view? What role or values might a reader assume that would undermine the premises of this ad? Look at the public service announcement in Image 3.32; notice that it is you and me, the readers of the ad, who are being questioned by the officer. The image insists that we take up a position in relationship to it. On the other hand, we are addressed as “sir.” How does this influence the ability of female readers to process and engage with the image?

In part two of this exercise, we turn to your own experience. You have been reading this book for nearly three chapters by now. That much immersion in any text will certainly call forth a subject position. Consider the following questions:

1. What subject position is the preferred one for this book? That is to say, who does this book “call to”? What kind of person, role, or character would find it easiest to read this book? What sorts of characteristics or consciousness are associated with that subject position?

2. Think about yourself as you read this book. You have to adopt a certain subject position in order to read it. How does that subject position differ from the subject positions that other texts—such as the text of a party you attended recently, the text of Fate of the Furious, or the text of the Fist Fight movie—call you to?

3. Suppose you hated this book, hated the class it had been assigned for, hated the whole subject. Think of an alternative, subversive subject position you could take in reading the book, one its author clearly did not hope for. What difference would that alternative subject position make in terms of the meanings of particular passages, examples, or exercises?

THE TEXT IN CONTEXT: METONYMY, POWER, JUDGMENT

Actually, the ways that we have gone about thinking about texts have always asked you to keep one eye on what is outside the text, on the real world within which texts do their work. What texts do is, as we have discovered, very complex. All the ads that we have examined in this chapter are, for example, trying to influence the meanings that people assign to certain products in order to sell those products. But critics, you will recall, are concerned with power and with how public business is managed in the rhetoric of popular culture. So, in addition to noting how ads sell cigarettes, critics will also ask about the ways in which ads, or any texts, manipulate the distribution of power as they manage public business. (Recall that the management of public business occurs in popular culture...
as texts influence decisions and sway meanings about important issues.) So this next group of questions will serve largely as a way of reviewing what you have already learned about texts. In considering, generally, what influence texts have in the social and political world, you will need to choose whether to focus on (1) **metonymies**, (2) **empowerment/disempowerment**, or (3) **judgment**.

**Metonymies**

You will recall that for reasons of increasing population, technology, pluralism, and, perhaps most of all, knowledge, public issues must be reduced or *metonymized* into the signs, artifacts, and texts of popular culture. Urban problems, for instance, are too complex to consider without reducing them to a series of news stories about particular incidents in neighborhoods and on subways that capture issues of poverty, crime, racial strife, and so forth. Only in that reduced form can people participate in the management of public issues by helping to determine what those issues and their components mean. Therefore, once you have thought about what the texts of popular culture *mean*, it is important to ask how those particular meanings *metonymize* public issues.

An interesting example of the use of metonymies in attempts to manage a public issue occurred during the 2012 presidential campaign and beyond. Mitt Romney, the Republican nominee, was accused by his opponents of being cruel and heartless in his treatment of his employees. Those who made this claim circulated a story, apparently true, that Romney and his family took a trip with the family dog strapped in a crate to the roof of their car. Surely a dog is hardly reason to judge a presidential candidate, but the eagerness with which his opponents circulated the story made it clear that the poor dog was made to stand in for Romney’s allegedly mistreated employees and to thus be an indication of Romney’s character.

**Empowerment/Disempowerment**

The category of empowerment/disempowerment is fairly straightforward. It asks us to consider who is empowered and who is disempowered by the meanings that might be assigned to or generated by the text. Remember that empowerment and disempowerment mainly befall large groups of people rather than isolated individuals. Recall also that power is managed in moment-to-moment, everyday experiences (including popular culture) far more often than it is in single, grand events. How does that empowerment or disempowerment result from the way that public issues are metonymized?

In the 2016 campaign of Hillary Rodham Clinton for the Democratic presidential nomination, much public discussion took place over her wardrobe, her demeanor, and her display of emotions. People might have recalled that early in the campaign of 2008, she famously choked up with tears when a supporter asked her “How do you do it?” in reference to her tireless campaigning. Clinton’s service as secretary of state from 2009 to 2013 often was discussed in terms of her demeanor and style. In 2016,
her followers were described by the metonymy of Pantsuit Nation in an attempt to use one of her favorite styles as a way to characterize them. Throughout her public life, her clothing has been analyzed as being too feminine or not feminine enough. It was clear that the secretary was being used as a metonymy for issues having to do with gender, gender bias, and politics. The secretary and the succession of episodes having to do with her appearance and emotions were used by the public as ways to manage these big issues through her metonymized example. Throughout her career, power and its distribution between men and women had to be addressed rhetorically by Clinton and her aides.

In the 1990s and 2000s, after decades of almost complete absence, gays and lesbians began appearing on television in much greater numbers, often taking center stage in situation comedies such as *Modern Family*, *Will and Grace*, *Ellen*, and *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*. The cable television channel Logo offers largely gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender-oriented programming. These television texts have metonymized some life experiences of gays and lesbians into sixty- or thirty-minute episodes. A number of critics have raised the issue of whether the shows are realistic or not. But metonymy, because it is a reduction, is hardly ever completely realistic. Perhaps more important questions would be, who is empowered and who is disempowered by these shows? Are they for the benefit of gays and lesbians or of straights? Do they tend to perpetuate the established system, the way things presently are, or do they encourage alternative distributions of power?

**Judgment**

The critic is not only concerned about power; he or she is interventionist as well. The critic has some purpose or goal in mind in doing rhetorical criticism—as we noted before, the critic is on a mission. That means that for the critic, judgment of the text is inevitable and unavoidable.

Judgment runs throughout all the insights offered by the critic. In suggesting that a text means this or that, the critic is also judging it. That is because to claim that a text means a certain thing, or calls for a certain subject position, or encourages a certain consciousness, is to take a stand about what the text is doing in the world.

Objectivity is not possible for the rhetorical critic. That is not to say that merely expressing personal opinions is an acceptable alternative for such a critic. All the categories and questions covered in this chapter guard against making criticism merely an expression of personal opinion; instead, they lead the critic into making well-supported judgments about the material that is being studied. Such categories and questions direct the critic to give reasons for her or his judgment. Thus, the choices that the critic makes, as illustrated in the five continua presented earlier in this chapter, are not made at random or simply for fun. They are choices that the critic must support with good reasons and evidence in an attempt to persuade the audience who will read or hear the criticism that the meanings the critic asserts are in certain texts are really there.
Summary and Review

The purpose of this chapter has been to help you learn how to think like a critic. In discussing the many things that rhetorical critics think about, we have covered quite a lot of concepts and terms. Does the critic have to use every term and concept included in this chapter in doing criticism? Certainly not. Remember, we have been explaining choices that are available to the critic. What should guide those choices? The critic should ask those questions that help to reveal the meanings that he or she finds most interesting and important. Let’s go over some of the more important ideas in this chapter once more in a quick summary.

We began by reviewing two basic principles: that texts wield their rhetorical influence by affecting the meanings that people attribute to the world, and that because meaning is complex, texts are often sites of struggle over what the world means. Therefore, critics are meaning detectives, and their chief task is to show what signs and texts mean and the meanings they urge upon their audiences.

Critics, working within the framework of critical studies, display three characteristics as they go about explaining meaning. We learned that critics are critical in both attitude and method; that is, they refuse to accept easy answers to the question of what texts mean, and the kinds of questions they ask about texts generally are not best answered through quantifying social scientific methods. We learned that because meaning is complex, difficult to articulate, and often beyond awareness, the specially trained critic is in the best position to say what texts mean. In explaining meaning, the critic shows people new ways to experience life and helps people to expand the ways they have of finding meaning.

Second, we learned that critics have the characteristic of being concerned with power. And third, we learned that critics are interventionist; they want to change people by changing how they understand the world and the meanings they see in the texts they encounter in everyday life.

Having arrived at an understanding of what critical studies do in general, we explored a number of choices that are available to the critic approaching the study of a text. First, we learned that the critic must position the text. This involves finding a text, for which the critic may consult her or his own experience or theories about texts. One major choice confronting the critic is to set up a text that is either discrete or diffuse, or somewhere in the middle of this first continuum. We also learned that the critic cannot study all the meanings of a text and is therefore faced with the choice of focusing on either broad or narrow meanings, or analyzing the text as a site of struggle over meanings. The third choice the critic must make in positioning the text is to focus upon an original or a new context in which to place the text. We learned that the critic may study original or new contexts in which others have placed the text, or may propose a new context of his or her own if doing so will help to illuminate what the text or context means. The critic’s final choice in positioning the text involves examining the text–context relationship and deciding whether to feature reactive or proactive relationships between text and context, or perhaps a mixed relationship between the two ends of that continuum.

We learned that one important consideration for critics is the use of intertextuality. Intertextuality (Continued)
Looking Ahead

This chapter has reflected the strong conviction that critics are deeply involved in helping their audiences to see certain meanings in texts. We began the chapter by arguing that meanings are the basis for rhetorical appeal, and one clear implication of that argument is the idea that critics are also rhetoricians. Rhetoricians argue for particular perspectives and views, often against other perspectives and views.

One might finish this chapter wondering whether critics are in agreement over which meanings to reveal to an audience. This particular chapter has had very little to say about disagreements among critics. And although we have focused on a critic’s choices, we have not shown one of the most important choices that critics cannot avoid—the choice of which sorts of “real-life” concerns and commitments to urge upon an audience in revealing the meaning of texts. In Chapters 4 and 5, we will turn to a discussion of the particular schools of thought within which critics work. Consider these questions as you prepare to begin the next chapters:

1. What are the different perspectives or schools of thought that critics work within as they reveal meanings?
2. What specific kinds of changes or new meanings do some critics want to instill in their audiences?
3. How can criticism serve “real-life” politics and social movements so as to help people who are in need of liberation?
IMAGE 3.1  A simple message on a hat becomes a site of struggle
IMAGE 3.2  ■ Givenchy ad for Play fragrance
IMAGE 3.4  ■  Movado watch ad

MOVADO
THE ART OF DESIGN

introducing movado master™ stainless steel with black sapphire bezel, rubber strap, automatic movement with exhibition case-back, at movado boutiques and select fine retailers nationwide. visit movado.com for locations.
Love Life in Your Backyard

BBQ OUTFITTERS
Your Backyard Super Store!

GAS LOGS

6715 RR 620 N • 1/4 MILE SOUTH OF 2222
(512) 347-1988 • bbqoutfitters.com
IMAGE 3.6  ■ “Just Add Friends”/Greenhouse Mall

Just Add Friends

Design your personal oasis at the Greenhouse Mall. It’s outdoor furniture with a fresh new twist. A style for every taste. A collection for every budget. The choices to create your special sanctuary.

austin – 9900 rr 620 north • 512.250.0000
austin – 12501 west hwy. 71 • 512.617.8888
san antonio – 11255 huebner rd. • 210.558.1818

www.greenhousemall.com
A startling juxtaposition of contrary and inconsistent images

For every hand taken in marriage, another hand is taken away.

To secure that their enslaved workers wouldn’t steal them, conflict diamond guerrilla’s would often cut off one of their hands. Beauty isn’t worth death.
IMAGE 3.8  LeBron James as a baby in a manufactured image accusing him of immaturity
**Chapter 3  ■  Rhetorical Methods in Critical Studies**

**IMAGE 3.9  ■  "Diesel gone good"/BMW ad**

Introducing BMW Advanced Diesel with BluePerformance. It’s the same technology that helped us win World Green Car of the Year, and it’s now available in America in the 335d and the X5 xDrive35d. With up to 36 mpg and an impressive 580 miles per tank, it’s as efficient as a four-cylinder with the performance of a V-8. And with 20% less CO₂ emissions, it’s also the cleanest, most powerful six-cylinder diesel in America. So you can still enjoy the drive and do it with a clear conscience. Visit bmwusa.com.

Diesel gone good.

Copyright ©2018 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher.
The Beautiful and Eco-Friendly Solution for Countertops

There are eco-friendly surfacing materials in the market today, but no other like ECO™ by Cosentino. New, durable and environmentally friendly, ECO by Cosentino is made of 75% recycled content composed of post-industrial or post-consumer materials and is bound by an environmentally friendly resin which comes in part from corn oil. ECO performs highly against staining, scratching and scorching and is non-porous; requiring no sealers. Available in 10 beautiful designer colors, ECO by Cosentino will naturally fit into any project or design.

To learn more visit: www.ecobycosentino.com

Stone Systems of Central Texas
199 Park Cover North, Buda, TX 78610
512.295.2950
Like a rich, complex, and supple wine an ALNO kitchen also leaves little to be desired. Meet ALNOSTAR HIGHLINE with clean lines and continuous case channels for a seamless effect. This premium collection also features a distinctive high-gloss lacquer finish in four sophisticated color choices. Designed with the epicurean in mind, ALNO kitchens – like fine estate wines – always demand perfection without compromise. Just one of the many collections from Europe’s leading kitchen design innovator.

To request a brochure or see more collections please call 512.383.9906 or visit us at www.ALNOAUSTIN.com or call 888.8906.ALNO nationwide.

ALNO AUSTIN | In the Design Center of Austin
3601 S. Congress Ave, Bldg. C | Austin, TX 78704
512.383.9906 | www.alnoaustin.com
South African Airways: The Fastest Way From New York To South Africa

Non-Stop From The Big Apple To The Big Five

Includes: Airfare • Fuel Surcharges • Hotel • Safari • Meals

South African Airways makes it easier and more affordable than ever for you to experience the vacation of a lifetime. Jet off in style to South Africa on our daily non-stop flight from New York (JFK) or daily direct flight from Washington, D.C. (Dulles) and let South Africa provide you with a spectacular experience that will help you sprints read. After all, there's no better time to go because your once-in-a-lifetime experience is on sale now.

Our South Africa On Sale Package Includes:
- Round-trip economy class airfare from either New York (JFK) or Washington, D.C. (Dulles) to Johannesburg and Cape Town
- Fuel surcharges of U.S. $300
- Domestic flights within South Africa
- Deluxe accommodations at The Commodore Hotel and Bokubung Bush Lodge
- 6 Breakfasts, 4 dinners
- Game drives
- Meet & Greet upon arrival
- Ground transfers

fysaavacations.com • 1-888-722-4872
Airfare • Accommodations • Customized Itineraries • Safari • Packages • Groups

*Prices are per person based on double occupancy accommodations and include fuel surcharges. Government taxes, departure fees, and September 11th Security Fee of approx. $140 per additional and payable prior to departure. Package prices are valid for travel Aug. 10 - Dec. 15, 2009. Travel must be completed by Dec. 15, 2009. Prices are valid for new bookings only, subject to availability, may change without notice, and are not retroactive. Blackout, peak period surcharges, cancellation charges, and other restrictions may apply.
**Savouring Perfection**

**A CELEBRATION OF BELGIAN FLAVOR**

There's a natural affinity between Belgian beers and fine food. Just as you might pair a dry Chardonnay with raw oysters or a Pinot Noir with an herb-encrusted beef tenderloin, the exceptional flavors of Stella Artois, Hoegaarden and Leffe complement a variety of cuisines. So, the next time you're planning a special meal, elevate it to perfection by choosing one of our fine Belgian beers to complement the occasion.

*Always Enjoy Responsibly.*

© 2008 Import Brands Alliance, Importers of Stella Artois® Beer (Malt Liquor in TQ), Hoegaarden® Beer and Leffe® Beers and Leffe® Blond Ale, St. Louis, MO.
The greatest luxury in life is time. Savour every second.

BREITLING FOR BENTLEY

Power. Luxury. Exclusivity. Breitling and Bentley share the same concern for perfection. The same exacting standards of reliability and precision. The same fusion of prestige and performance. In the Breitling workshops, just as in the Bentley factories in Crewe, cutting-edge technology works hand in hand with the noblest traditions. Born from a passion for fine mechanisms, the Breitling for Bentley collection offers connoisseurs a rich range of exceptional chronographs. While conveying the quintessence of aesthetic refinement, these wrist instruments are all equipped with high-performance "motors," precisely assembled by watchmakers at the peak of their art. Time is the ultimate luxury.

The Bentley Motors
30-second chronograph and variable tachometer (exclusive systems).
Officially chronometer-certified by the COSC.

breitlingforbentley.com
Part 1 ■ Theory

**IMAGE 3.18**  ■ A clothing label in the rubble of a Third World factory that exploded connects fashionable style with dangerous working conditions
IMAGE 3.19  D&G ad showing pouty young men
IMAGE 3.20  ■ Bombay Sapphire ad

Ten journeys contained in a single drop.

BOMBAY SAPPHIRE
THE SPIRIT OF EXPLORATION
IMAGE 3.21  ■ Condoms and fashion accessories don’t usually go together, but this image boosts the allure of the condom.

Condoms should be stored in a cool and dry place. They should not be exposed to sunlight or friction. If stored properly and used during sex, they help prevent contraction of HIV, the virus that leads to AIDS. Anyone you sleep with could be HIV positive.

CONDOMS SAVE LIVES...USE THEM.
Image 3.22  ■  Windows Vista ad

Stunningly Light.  
Powerfully Beautiful.

A Unique Notebook Starts with a Unique Design.
Discover how the ASUS UX50 will fit your unique lifestyle at www.discoverUX50.com.

One stop entertainment shop.  
Enjoy all the media on your PC—your photos, music, videos and recorded TV—even in hi-def, with Windows® Media Center. ASUS UX50 is pre-installed with Windows Vista Home Premium.
Your World MasterCard® comes with rewards, offers and perks that matter to you. Whether it's a deep tissue massage or a seat at the chef's table, you decide what's in your perfect world. Plus, with your US Airways® Dividend Miles® Premier World MasterCard® you can earn double miles and get First-class check-in and Zone 2 boarding when you book a flight through US Airways. Offers may vary. Go to priceless.com/world and register for more details.

*All terms and conditions of the Dividend Miles program apply. US Airways reserves the rights to change the Dividend Miles program and its terms and conditions at any time without notice. Any such changes may affect your ability to use the miles or mileage credits you may have accumulated. For complete details about the Dividend Miles program visit, www.flyusairways.com. Offers and illustrations actual offers may vary. Terms and conditions apply. Go to priceless.com/world and register for more details. MasterCard, Priceless and World MasterCard are registered trademarks of MasterCard International Incorporated and are used by the issuer pursuant to a license. ©2009 MasterCard.
What are some meanings that can be read into this?
IF YOU STINK, USE ONE OF OUR AMAZINGLY SCENTED SCENTS. IF YOU STINK AT GETTING LADIES, CALL ME, BECAUSE THAT'S EMBARRASSING. 866-578-4514

Old Spice

DIFFERENT SCENTS FOR DIFFERENT GENTS
Dry Dock

With nary an ocean in sight,
Perla's still manages to evoke
the pleasures of seaside dining.
IMAGE 3.27 What is against what; young children and jail aren’t usually associated with each other

Copyright ©2018 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher.
How is the car transformed in this image?
"Think Indian" American Indian College Fund ad

To think Indian is
to grow radishes
on the moon.

HELP TRIBAL COLLEGE
STUDENTS PRESERVE
THEIR WAY OF THINKING.
1-800-776-FUND

AMERICAN
INDIAN
COLLEGE
FUND
thinkindian.org
"It's Not What We Do..."/365 Church ad

365 Church is a non-denominational church whose mission is to help the new generation focus their life on the Kingdom of God.

A NEW CHURCH FOR A NEW GENERATION

Meet at the TexARTS' Keller Williams Studio
2300 Lohmans Spur @ 620

337-515-1574 | the365church.com
IMAGE 3.32 ■ You and I are the ones being interrogated

EXCUSE ME SIR, HOW MUCH HAVE YOU HAD TO DRINK TONIGHT?