

Toolkit of Analytical Methods I: Seeing Better, Seeing More

"Reserving judgments is a matter of infinite hope." Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*

"See better, Lear." Shakespeare, *King Lear*

FOCUS ON THE DETAILS

This chapter offers a set of tools for training your ways of seeing and making sense of things—the world, images, and especially written texts. Rhetoricians call these tools *heuristics*, from the Greek word for discovery. Heuristic has the same root as Eureka—"I've found it!" All of the heuristics in this chapter seek to help you to discover things to say about whatever you are studying. The final third of the chapter surveys the counterproductive habits of mind that these activities seek to replace.

NOTICING

- Noticing significant detail is a skill that can be improved through practice.
- The ability to notice is blocked by common habits of mind: judging and generalizing and leaping prematurely to conclusions.
- One solution: experiment with eliminating the words *like*, *dislike*, *agree*, and *disagree* from your vocabulary, at least for a while.
- Another solution: slow down. Dwell longer in the open-ended, exploratory, information-gathering stage.

A. The Heuristics

There are two broad categories of heuristics in this chapter—observation strategies and interpretive prompts. Both seek to retrain the way you focus your attention from the global (general) to the local. Here is a list of the chapter's heuristics, each with a very brief summary of what it involves. We will then go on to explain each in more detail.

HEURISTICS

1. Notice and Focus + Ranking
(select a few details as most important: What do you find most "Interesting" or "Strange"?)
2. The Method: Looking for Patterns of Repetition and Contrast
(organize details into groupings based on similarity or opposition)
3. Asking So What?
(make the leap from observing X to querying what X means)
4. Paraphrase \times (times) 3
(recast the key words in new language to question what they mean)
5. Identifying a "Go To" Sentence
(locate the sentence shape a writer habitually uses; then ponder how that shape reveals the writer's habitual ways of seeing)

Note: these heuristics are not formulae for organizing papers. They are "thinking moves" designed to produce higher quality material that will eventually go into an essay or argument or report. The heuristics lend themselves to group work, to collaborative thinking, as well as individual work. The best way to get good at these observation and thinking skills is to try them out repeatedly with other writers. In Unit II, you'll be invited to put them to work in writing papers and other kinds of assignments.

1. NOTICE AND FOCUS + RANKING

RULES OF NOTICE & HABITS OF MIND:
SLOW DOWN

Not "What do you think?" &
Not "What do you like or dislike?"
but

"What do you notice?"

A few prompts:

What do you find most INTERESTING?
What do you find most STRANGE?
What do you find most REVEALING?

The activity called Notice and Focus guides you to dwell longer with the data before feeling compelled to decide what the data mean. Repeatedly returning to the question, "What do you notice?" is one of the best ways to counteract the tendency to generalize too rapidly. "What do you notice?" redirects attention to the subject matter itself and delays the pressure to come up with answers.

Start by noticing as much as you can about whatever it is you are studying. Next, narrow your scope to a representative portion of your evidence, and then dwell with the data. Record what you see. Don't move to generalization, or worse, to judgment.

What this procedure will begin to demonstrate is how useful description is as a tool for arriving at ideas. If you stay at the description stage longer, deliberately delaying leaps to conclusions, you are more likely to arrive at better ideas. Training yourself to notice will improve your memory and your ability to think.

Step 1: Cast a wide net by continuing to list details you notice. Go longer than you normally would before stopping—often the tenth or eleventh detail is the one that will eventually lead to your best idea.

Step 2: Focus inside what you've noticed. Rank the various features of your subject you have noticed. Answer the question "What details (specific features of the subject matter) are most interesting (or significant or revealing or strange)?" The purpose of relying on *interesting* or one of the other suggested words is that these will help to deactivate the like/dislike switch of the judgment reflex and replace it with a more analytical perspective.

Step 3: Say why three things you selected struck you as the most interesting (or revealing or significant or strange). Saying why will trigger interpretive leaps to the possible meaning of whatever you find most interesting in your observations.

Discussion Let's pause a moment to ponder the key words in step 2: interesting, revealing, strange. What does it mean to find something *interesting*? Often, we are interested by things that have captured our attention without our clearly knowing why. Interest and curiosity are near cousins. To say that something is interesting is not the end but the beginning of analysis: then you figure out what is interesting about this feature of your subject and why.

The word *strange* is a useful prompt because it gives us permission to notice oddities and things that initially seem not to fit. Strange, in this context, is not a judgmental term but one denoting features of a subject or situation that aren't readily explainable. Where you locate something strange, you have isolated something to interpret—to figure out what makes it strange and why.

Along similar lines, the words *revealing* and *significant* work by requiring you to make choices that can lead to interpretive leaps. If something strikes you as revealing or significant, even if you're not yet sure why, you will eventually begin producing some explanation. What is revealed, and why is it revealing?

Troubleshooting Notice and Focus

In the Noticing phase of Notice and Focus, you will be tempted to begin having ideas and making claims about your subject. Resist this temptation. Many of those first stabs at ideas will be overly general, fairly obvious, and they will block further noticing.

A Quick Note on 10 on 1

In later chapters (4 & 10), you will encounter a key heuristic that is the cousin of Notice and Focus. It is called "10 on 1"—based on the notion that it is productive to say more about less, to make ten points or observations about a single example rather

than making the same overly general or obvious point about ten related examples. Like Notice and Focus, 10 on 1 depends on extended observation but it reduces scope to a single representative piece of evidence.

Try This 2.1: Doing Notice and Focus with a Room

Practice this activity as a class or in small groups with the room you're in. List a number of details about it, then rank the three most important ones. Use as a focusing question any of the four words suggested above—*interesting*, *significant*, *revealing*, or *strange*. Or come up with your own focus for the ranking, such as the three aspects of the room that seem most to affect the way you feel and behave in the space. Then you might go home and repeat the exercise alone in the room of your choice. Start out not with “what do I think?” but with “what do I notice?” And remember to keep the process going longer than might feel comfortable: “what else do I notice?”

Try This 2.2: Notice and Focus Fieldwork

Try this exercise with a range of subjects: an editorial, the front page of a newspaper, a website, a key paragraph from something you are reading, the style of a favorite writer, conversations overheard around campus, looking at people's shoes, political speeches, a photograph, a cartoon, and so forth. (The speech bank at americanrhetoric.com is an excellent source.) Remember to include all three steps: notice, rank, and say why.

2. THE METHOD: WORK WITH PATTERNS OF REPETITION AND CONTRAST

THE METHOD

What repeats?

What goes with what? (strands)

What is opposed to what? (binaries)

(for all of these questions) ---> SO WHAT?

What doesn't fit? (anomalies) So what?

“The Method” is our shorthand for a systematic procedure for analyzing evidence by looking for patterns of repetition and contrast. It offers a way to get the big picture

without overgeneralizing—it is insistently empirical. It also has an uncanny ability to help you figure out what is most important in anything you read.

Using The Method induces you to get physical with the data—literally, for you will find yourself circling, underlining, and listing. Although you will thus descend from the heights of abstraction to the realm of concrete detail, the point of tallying repetitions and strands and binaries and then selecting the most important and interesting ones is to trigger ideas. The discipline required to notice patterns in the language will produce more specific, more carefully grounded conclusions than you otherwise might have made.

Like Notice and Focus, The Method orients you toward significant detail; but whereas Notice and Focus is a deliberately unstructured activity, The Method applies a matrix or grid of observational moves to a subject.

Step 1: List exact repetitions and the number of each (words, details). For example, if forms of the word *seems* repeat three times, write “seems × 3.” With images, the repeated appearance of high foreheads would constitute an exact repetition.

Concentrate on substantive (meaning-carrying) words. Only in rare cases will words like “and” or “the” merit attention as a significant repetition. At the most literal level, whatever repeats is what the thing is about.

Step 2: List repetitions of the same or similar kind of detail or word—which we call **strands** (for example, *polite*, *courteous*, *decorous*). Be able to explain the strand's connecting logic with a label: manners.

Step 3: List details or words that form or suggest **binary oppositions**—pairs of words or details that are opposites—and select from these the most important ones, which function as **organizing contrasts** (for example, *open/closed*, *ugly/beautiful*, *global/local*). Binaries help you locate what is at stake in the subject—the tensions and issues it is trying to resolve.

Step 4: Choose ONE repetition or strand or binary as most important or interesting and explain in one healthy paragraph why you think it's important. (This ranking, as in Notice and Focus, prompts an interpretive leap.)

Step 5: Locate **anomalies**: exceptions to the pattern, things that seem not to fit. Anomalies become evident only after you have discerned a pattern, so it is best to locate repetitions, strands, and organizing contrasts—things that fit together in some way—before looking for things that seem not to fit. Once you see an anomaly, you will often find that it is part of a strand you had not detected (and perhaps one side of a previously unseen binary).

Discussion The method of looking for patterns works through a series of steps. Hold yourself initially to doing the steps one at a time and in order. Later, you will be able to record your answers under each of the three steps simultaneously. Although the steps of The Method are discrete and modular, they are also consecutive. They proceed by a kind of narrative logic. Each step leads logically to the next, and then to various kinds of regrouping, which is actually rethinking.

Tip: Expect ideas to suggest themselves to you as you move through the steps of The Method. Strands often begin to suggest other strands that are in opposition to them. Words you first took to be parts of one strand may migrate to different strands. This process of noticing and then relocating words and details into different patterns is one aspect of doing The Method that can push your analysis to interpretation.

The Method can be applied to virtually anything you wish to analyze—an essay, a political campaign, a work of visual or verbal art—a dense passage from some secondary source you feel is important but can't quite figure out and—last but not least—your own writing.

It may be helpful to think of this method of analysis as a form of mental doodling. Rather than worrying about what you are going to say, or about whether or not you understand, you instead get out a pencil and start tallying up what you see. Engaged in this process, you'll soon find yourself gaining entry to the logic of your subject matter. To some extent, doing The Method is archaeological. It digs into the language or the material details of whatever you are analyzing in order to unearth its thinking. This is most evident in the discovery of organizing contrasts.

Binary oppositions often indicate places where there is struggle among various points of view. And there is usually no single "right" answer about which of a number of binaries is the primary organizing contrast. One of the best ways to develop your analyses is to try on different possible oppositions as the primary one. A related technique is to repeatedly recast the key terms in the binaries. (For more on this technique, see "reformulating binaries" in Chapter 4: Toolkit of Analytical Methods II.)

Two Examples of The Method Generating Ideas

Try noticing repetitions and contrasts in your own writing. This will help you to recognize and develop your ideas. In the paragraph below, you can see how the writer's noticing strands and binaries directs his thinking.

The most striking aspect of the spots is how different they are from typical fashion advertising. If you look at men's fashion magazines, for example, at the advertisements for the suits of Ralph Lauren or Valentino or Hugo Boss, they almost always consist of a beautiful man, with something interesting done to his hair, wearing a gorgeous outfit. At the most, the man may be gesturing discreetly, or smiling in the demure way that a man like that might smile after, say, telling the supermodel at the next table no thanks he has to catch an early-morning flight to Milan. But that's all. The beautiful face and the clothes tell the whole story. The Dockers ads, though, are almost exactly the opposite. There's no face. The camera is jumping around so much that it's tough to concentrate on the clothes. And instead of stark simplicity, the fashion image is overlaid with a constant, confusing patter. It's almost as if the Dockers ads weren't primarily concerned with clothes at all—and in fact that's exactly what Levi's intended. What the company had discovered,

in its research, was that baby-boomer men felt that the chief thing missing from their lives was male friendship. Caught between the demands of the families that many of them had started in the eighties and career considerations that had grown more onerous, they felt they had lost touch with other men. The purpose of the ads—the chatter, the lounging around, the quick cuts—was simply to conjure up a place where men could put on one-hundred-percent-cotton khakis and reconnect with one another. In the original advertising brief, that imaginary place was dubbed Dockers World.

—Malcolm Gladwell, "Listening to Khakis"

First, Gladwell notes the differences in two kinds of fashion ads aimed at men. There are the high fashion ads and the Dockers ads. In the first of these, the word "beautiful" repeats twice as part of a strand (including "gorgeous," "interesting," "supermodel," "demure"). The writer then poses traits of the Dockers ads as an opposing strand. Instead of beautiful face there is no face, instead of "gorgeous outfit," "it's tough to concentrate on the clothes." These oppositions cause the writer to make his interpretive leap, that the Dockers ads "weren't primarily concerned with clothes at all" and that this was intentional.

In the student essay below, Lesley Stephen develops a key contrast between two thinkers, Sigmund Freud and Michel Foucault, by noticing the different meanings that each attaches to some of the same key words. The Method helps to locate the key terms and to define them by seeing what other words they suggest (strands).

Freud defines civilization as serving two main purposes. The first is to protect men against nature and the second is to adjust their mutual relations. Freud seems to offer returning to nature as a possible solution for men's sexual freedom. I think Freud might believe that returning to nature by rejecting civilization could bring about sexual freedom, but that sexual freedom does not necessarily equal happiness.

Foucault completely defies Freud's idea that sexuality is natural and that repression exists as anti-sexuality. He believes that everything is created from discourse; nothing is natural. And because nothing is natural, nothing is repressed. There is no such thing as a natural desire; if the desire exists, it is because it is already part of the discourse.

By focusing on repetitions of the words "nature" and "natural" and then seeing what goes with what, the writer creates a succinct and revealing comparison.

Doing The Method on a Poem

Here is an example of how one might do The Method on a piece of text—in this case, a student poem. We use a poem because it is compact and so allows us to illustrate efficiently how The Method works. See also the use of The Method on a visual image in Chapter 6, Making Interpretations Plausible.

Adjust is

Brooklyn Heights, 4:00 A.M.
 Dana Ferrelli
 sipping a warm forty oz.
 Coors Light on a stoop in
 Brooklyn Heights. I look
 across the street, in the open window;
 Blonde bobbing heads, the
 smack of a jump rope, laughter
 of my friends breaking
 beer bottles. Putting out their
 burning filters on the #5 of
 a hopscotch court.
 We reminisce of days when we were
 Fat, pimple faced—
 look how far we've come. But tomorrow
 a little blonde girl will
 pick up a Marlboro Light filter, just to play.
 And I'll buy another forty, because
 that's how I play now.
 Reminiscing about how far I've come

Doing the Method on a Poem: Our Analysis

1. *Words that repeat exactly:* forty × 2, blonde × 2, how far we've (I've) come × 2, light × 2, reminisce, reminiscing × 2, filter, filters × 2, Brooklyn Heights × 2
2. *Strands:* jump rope, laughter, play, hopscotch (connecting logic: childhood games representing the carefree worldview of childhood) Coors Light, Marlboro Light filters, beer bottles (connecting logic: drugs, adult "games," escapism?)
 Smack, burning, breaking (violent actions and powerful emotion: burning)
3. *Binary oppositions:* how far we've come/how far I've come (a move from plural to singular, from a sense of group identity to isolation, from group values to a more individual consideration)
 Blonde bobbing heads/little blonde girl
 Burning/putting out

Coors Light, Marlboro Lights/jump rope, hopscotch
 How far I've come (two meanings of *far*?, one positive, one not)
 Heights/stoop
 Present/past

4. *Ranked repetitions, strands and binaries plus paragraph explaining the choice of one of these as central to understanding.*

Most important repetitions: forty, how far we've/I've come

Most important strands: jump rope, laughter, play, hopscotch, Coors Light, Marlboro Light filters, beer bottles

Most important binaries: jump rope, laughter, play, hopscotch versus Coors Light, Marlboro Light filters, beer bottles; burning/putting out

Analysis (Healthy Paragraphs) The repetition of *forty* (forty ounce beer) is interesting. It signals a certain weariness—perhaps with a kind of pun on forty to suggest middle age and thus the speaker's concern about moving toward being older in a way that seems stale and flat. The beer, after all, is warm—which is not the best state for a beer to be in, once opened, if it is to retain its taste and character. Forty ounces of beer might also suggest excess—"supersizing."

The most important (or at least most interesting) binary opposition is *burning versus putting out*. This binary seems to be part of a more intense strand in the poem, one that runs counter to the weary prospect of moving on toward a perhaps lonely ("how far I've come") middle-aged feeling. Burning goes with breaking and the smack of the jump rope, and even putting out (a strand), if we visualize putting out not just as fire extinguished but in terms of putting a cigarette out by pushing the burning end of it into something (the number 5 on the Hopscotch court). The poem's language has a violent and passionate edge to it, even though the violent words are not always in a violent context (for example, the smack of the jump rope).

This is a rather melancholy poem in which, perhaps, the speaker is mourning the passing, the "putting out" of the passion of youth ("burning"). In the poem's more obvious binary—the opposition of childhood games to more "adult" ones—the same melancholy plays itself out, making the poem's refrain-like repetition of "how far I've come" ring with unhappy irony. The little blonde girl is an image of the speaker's own past self (since the poem talks about reminiscing), and the speaker mourns that little girl's (her own) passing into a more uncertain and less carefree state. It is 4:00 A.M. in Brooklyn Heights—just about the end of night, the darkest point perhaps before the beginning of morning. But windows are open, suggesting possibility, so things are not all bad. The friends make noise together, break bottles together, revisit hopscotch square 5 together, and contemplate moving on.

Why Do The Method?

It does take some getting used to, working with The Method. It fragments everything; it can appear as if you are ignoring the usual cues by which you make sense of things, such as reading consecutively, from a to b to c, rather than looking for

and tabulating all of the a's, all of the b's and so forth. And why read for pattern in the first place? Two answers are:

- The Method can help you to control in condensed form a wealth of information. The organizational grids will bring out the features of the subject that are most important, what the reading or image is most concerned with (which repeats), and what it is concerned or worried about (what is opposed to what).
- The Method can spur you to discover things to say about whatever you are analyzing. In the normal process of observing, and especially of reading, we are often not attending to what repeats or contrasts. We're just taking in the information—not *doing* anything with it. But when you do things with information, that promotes thinking; it makes you an active learner.

Try This 2.3: Experiment in a Group Setting with The Method—Use a Visual Image by Adrian Tomine

Often, it will seem strange at first to read or analyze in the somewhat mechanical form that The Method prescribes, so it makes sense to work collaboratively at first, in small groups or with everyone in the class, to collect the data. Appoint one group member as scribe. Keep each other on task—do each step discretely. As with Notice and Focus, prolong the observation phase and refrain from judgments and big claims, at least until you begin writing about what is important (step 4).

Try an image by Adrian Tomine—a frequent contributor to *The New Yorker* magazine and a graphic novelist. Just use Google Images for “New Yorker covers + Tomine” to obtain a range of possibilities. We suggest his August 24, 2009 cover, “Double Feature”—an image of a crowd at dusk beneath the Brooklyn Bridge. Then, for homework, repeat the exercise alone, using a second Tomine cover—we suggest the November 8, 2004 cover, “Missed Connection,” featuring a man and a woman looking at each other from passing subway cars.

Try This 2.4: Apply The Method to Arts & Letters Daily

Select any article from our favorite website, Arts & Letters Daily (aldaily.com), and do The Method on it. You can actually apply The Method to anything you are reading, especially a piece you wish to understand better. You can use the front page of the newspaper, a speech from the American Rhetoric website, perhaps a series of editorials on the same subject, an essay, one or more poems by the same author (because The Method is useful for reading across texts for common denominators), and so on. You can work with as little as a few paragraphs or as much as an entire article or chapter or book. The key is to practice the procedure so that it becomes familiar: so that you will begin to look for repetitions and contrasts almost naturally.

3. ASKING “SO WHAT?”

PUSHING OBSERVATIONS TO CONCLUSIONS: ASKING SO WHAT?

(shorthand for)

What does the observation imply?

Why does this observation matter?

Where does this observation get us?

How can we begin to theorize the significance of the observation?

Asking So what? is a universal prompt for spurring the move from observation to implication and ultimately interpretation. Asking So what?—or its milder cousin, And so?—is a calling to account, a way of pressing yourself to confront that essential question, “Why does this matter?” It is thus a challenge to make meaning through a creative leap—to move beyond the patterns and emphases you’ve been observing in the data to tentative conclusions about what these observations suggest. In step 4 of The Method, when you select a single repetition, strand, or contrast and write about why it’s important, you are essentially asking So what? and answering that question.

Step 1: describe significant evidence, paraphrasing key language and looking for interesting patterns of repetition and contrast.

Step 2: begin to query your own observations by making what is implicit explicit.

Step 3: push your observations and statements of implications to interpretive conclusions by again asking So what?

Discussion First, a note on implication—crucial to step 2, and a subject treated at length in the next chapter. For now, it is enough to know that implications are suggested meanings. We look at the evidence and draw a conclusion that is not directly stated but that follows from what we see.

For example, a recent article in *Foreign Policy* entitled “Bury the Graveyard” demonstrates that the reputation of Afghanistan as “the graveyard of empires” is a “bogus history,” or myth. So what? The *implication*, unstated but palpable, is that the makers of U.S. foreign policy should seek out another version of the history of military intervention in Afghanistan—one that might put current military efforts there in a better light. When you ask So what? you are looking to make overt (direct, clear) what is at present indirect.

The tone of So what? can sound rude or at least brusque, but that directness can be liberating. Often, writers will go to great lengths to avoid stating what they take something to mean. After all, that leaves them open to attack, they fear, if they get it wrong. But asking So what? is a way of forcing yourself to take the plunge without too much hoopla. And when you are tempted to stop thinking too soon, asking So what? will press you onward.

For example, let's say you make a number of observations about the nature of e-mail communication—it's cheap, informal, often grammatically incorrect, full of abbreviations ("IMHO"), and ephemeral (impermanent). You rank these and decide that its ephemerality is most interesting. So what? Well, that's why so many people use it, you speculate, because it doesn't last. So what that its popularity follows from its ephemerality? Well, apparently we like being released from the hard-and-fast rules of formal communication; e-mail frees us. So what? Well, . . .

The repeated asking of this question causes people to push on from and pursue the implications of their first responses; it prompts people to reason in a chain, rather than settling prematurely for a single link, as the next example illustrates.

MOVING FORWARD

Observation --> So what? --> Implications

Implications --> So what? --> Conclusions

Asking So What?: An Example

The following is the opening paragraph of a talk given by a professor of Political Science at our college, Dr. Jack Gambino, on the occasion of a gallery opening featuring the work of two contemporary photographers of urban and industrial landscapes. We have located in brackets our annotations of his turns of thought, as these pivot on "strange" and "So what?" (Note: images referred to in the example are available from Google Images—type in Camilo Vergara Fern Street 1988, also Edward Burtynsky.)

If you look closely at Camilo Vergara's photo of Fern Street, Camden, 1988, you'll notice a sign on the side of a dilapidated building:

**Danger: Men Working
W. Hargrove Demolition**

Perhaps that warning captures the ominous atmosphere of these very different kinds of photographic documents by Camilo Vergara and Edward Burtynsky: "Danger: Men Working." Watch out—human beings are at work! But the work that is presented is not so much a building-up as it is a tearing-down—the work of demolition. [*strange: tearing down is unexpected; writer asks So what? and answers:*] Of course, demolition is often necessary in order to construct anew: old buildings are leveled for new projects, whether you are building a highway or bridge in an American city or a dam in the Chinese countryside. You might call modernity itself, as so many have, a process of creative destruction, a term used variously to describe modern art, capitalism, and technological innovation. The photographs in this exhibit, however, force us to pay attention to the "destructive" side of

this modern equation. [*strange: photos emphasize destruction and not creation; writer asks So what? and answers*] What both Burtynsky and Vergara do in their respective ways is to put up a warning sign—they question whether the reworking of our natural and social environment leads to a sustainable human future. And they wonder whether the process of creative destruction may not have spun recklessly out of control, producing places that are neither habitable nor sustainable. In fact, a common element connecting the two photographic versions is the near absence of people in the landscape. [*writer points to supporting feature of evidence, which he will further theorize*] While we see the evidence of the transforming power of human production on the physical and social environment, neither Vergara's urban ruins nor Burtynsky's industrial sites actually show us "men working." [*writer continues to move by noticing strange absence of people in photographs of sites where men work*] Isolated figures peer suspiciously out back doors or pick through the rubble, but they appear out of place. [*writer asks a final So what? and arrives at a conclusion:*] It is this sense of displacement—of human beings alienated from the environments they themselves have created—that provides the most haunting aspect of the work of these two photographers.

The Gambino paragraph is a good example of how asking So what? generates forward momentum for the analysis. Notice the pattern by which the paragraph moves: the observation of something strange, about which the writer asks and answers So what? several times until arriving at a final So what?—the point at which he decides what his observations ultimately mean. We call the final So what? in this chain of thinking "the ultimate So what?" because it moves from implications to the writer's culminating point.

Try This 2.5 Track the "So What?" Question

The aim of this exercise is to sensitize you to the various moves a writer makes when he or she presents and analyzes information. Locate any piece of analytical prose—an article from Arts & Letters Daily online, a passage from a textbook, a paper you or a friend has written. Focus on how it proceeds more than on what it says. That is, look for places where the writer moves from presenting evidence (step 1) to formulating that evidence into patterns of connection or contrast (step 2) and then asking So what? about it (step 3). Identify these moves in the margin as we have done inside brackets in the Gambino example.