7 Analyses and Reviews

In the last chapter we discussed procedures for writing research papers in the humanities. Research requires wide reading on a well-defined topic. As a researcher, you are on a quest to learn as much as you can about your topic and then to draw inferences from the wide variety of material that you read. But often in your humanities courses you will be asked to do a *close* reading of a text, rather than a wide reading of secondary sources. Instead of asking you to do a research paper or a term paper on *Hard Times*, your instructor may ask you to do a "close reading," or an "analysis," or a "critical paper" on *Hard Times*. In that case, the most important part of your job will be to read and to reread *Hard Times*—to sit and think, rather than to run and search.

On the other hand, you are asked to think, not to emote or to free associate. You may want to make a private record of your emotional responses to *Hard Times* or to whatever artistic work you have been assigned to analyze, but your finished paper should focus on your ideas about the work of art, not on your personal feelings.

In both an *analysis* and a *review*, you are expected to do critical thinking; you must discern various qualities of the work of art under consideration. Despite the popular connotations of the word "critical," a *critical paper* is not necessarily supposed to be fault finding. When you write a critical analysis, you are not expected to focus on whether you like the work or not but instead on what you perceive about the parts of the work and their relationships with each other.

If you are asked to write a *critical analysis*, your professor probably wants you to avoid or deemphasize specifically evaluative commentary. In the case of an analysis, you should probably assume that the work in question is considered by experts to be worth the time you are asked to spend thinking about it. In a *review* or *critique*, on the other hand, you are expected to evaluate the work in terms of its successful or less successful features.

The function of all the papers described in this chapter is to allow you to explore an artistic experience in some depth. This direct intellectual

confrontation with the works of the creative imagination is at the heart of the humanities. To fulfill the purposes of these assignments, you must focus your attention as completely as possible on the works of art in question. Resources in the library can help you identify words and images that you do not know, but unless your instructor tells you to do research, you should reflect on the work of art without looking up other people's opinions about the experience. In other words, your task is to contemplate the work of art directly, without using intermediary sources to tell you what to think about the experience. In both analyses and reviews, it is perfectly proper and even necessary to use "I." The sound of a human voice is especially appropriate in papers of this type.

It is wise to assume that you are analyzing the work in question for an audience that includes your instructor and your classmates. Most of the time, in an analysis you are expected to assume that your audience has read the poem or novel, seen the performance, or looked at the painting. Your role is to illuminate the work of art through an explanation of your own informed vision. In a review, you usually should not assume that the readers of your paper have read the book that you are reviewing. But you should check with your instructor on this point.

Analyzing a poem

Suppose that you have been assigned to analyze the following sonnet by William Wordsworth:

THE WORLD IS TOO MUCH WITH US

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not.—Great God! I'd rather be
A pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

Many students, especially those who do not plan to be English majors, are needlessly intimidated by this assignment. Some students think that they do not like poetry, and even those who like it believe that they won't like analyzing it, especially not in a formal paper. Students object to "tearing the poem apart." But in this case, analysis involves looking at the

parts only to get a better vision of the whole. Analysis means examining the parts and then putting them together, not tearing things apart.

Getting started An analysis of a poem begins with a careful reading of it. Read the poem several times, at least once or twice aloud. Remember that the poet has taken great care in selecting and arranging these particular words in this special order to create a total effect of meaning, form, and sound.

Take a few minutes and jot down everything that you think of when you read the poem. You probably won't be able to use much of this material directly in your formal analysis, but the time you take to express your feelings about the poem will be important in the long run. A poem is written to reach you emotionally and intellectually. Even though your formal paper will be an intellectual discussion of the poem, your analysis will be more alive and meaningful if it has its roots in some feeling about the poem. Also, if you allow yourself to express feelings about the poem at first, you may find yourself more involved in the project than you thought you would be.

Although self-expression is important, your major purpose for this assignment is to think about the poem. But how does a person think about a poem? First of all, ask yourself what you know about this poem, from your textbook, from classroom discussion, from previous reading. The poem looks short, so you might as well count the lines, looking for the magic number fourteen. Sure enough, the fourteen lines indicate that you may be dealing with a special form, a *sonnet*. Now a trip to the library is in order, but not to look up other people's interpretations of the poem. Instead, look up "sonnet" in a glossary of literary terms, such as M. H. Abrams's *A Glossary of Literary Terms*.[1]

Here you will find a wealth of ideas for organizing your paper. You will learn, for example, that because of the way that Wordsworth's sonnet rhymes, it is an example of a Petrarchan sonnet, which usually discusses a problem or situation in the first eight lines and then presents some sort of resolution in the last six. Now you have something quite specific to put in your notes (figure 7.1). You just have developed a possible structure for your analysis. But you have only the skeleton at this point. Most important in a poem are the words, and you have to find out much more about the words of this poem. As Donald Hall says in *Writing Well*,[2] you have to get "inside" these words, to find out as much about them and their family relationships as the poet knew and felt.

Begin with the unfamiliar names, Triton and Proteus. A good desk dictionary will tell you something about these pagan sea gods. If you want to see them more clearly—as clearly as Wordsworth did on his pleasant lea—then look them up in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* or in a dictionary of mythology.

1 3rd ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971).
2 3rd ed. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979).

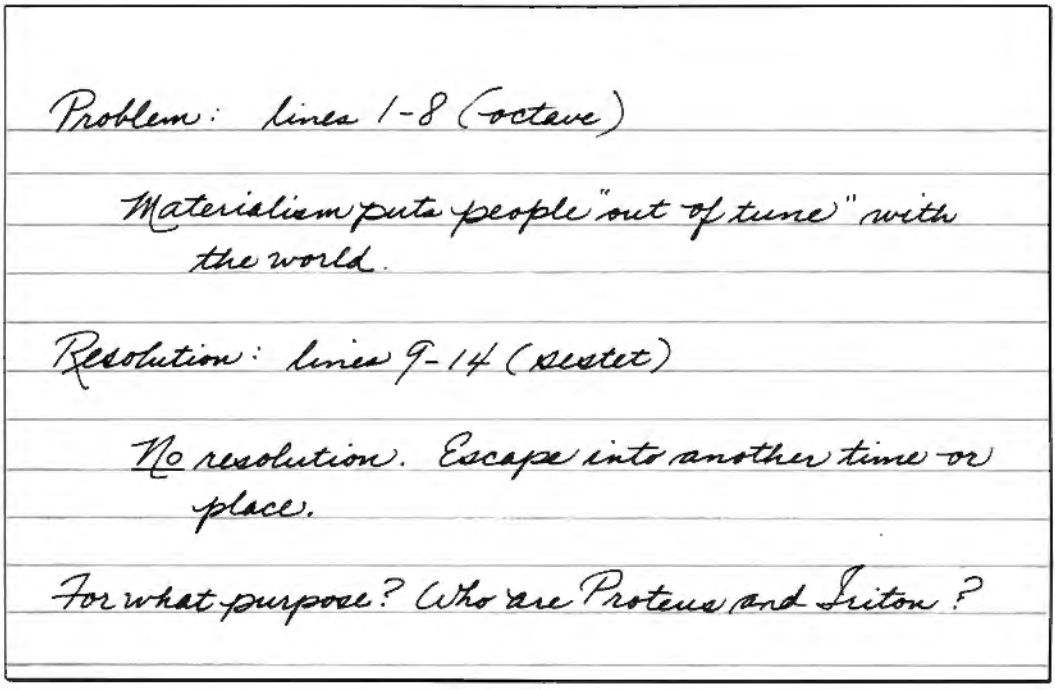

FIGURE 7.1
Preliminary notes in an analysis of a sonnet.

Then look up "lea," "forlorn," "suckled," and other unfamiliar words in a good desk dictionary or, even better, in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (O.E.D.), which will give you the complete history of the word up to the time Wordsworth chose it. (See figure 7.2 for help in reading entries in the O.E.D.) *The Oxford English Dictionary* is a particularly good place to look up familiar words like "world" and "nature," especially if you get interested in why Wordsworth uses those two words in opposition to each other. Doesn't nature include the world, and doesn't the world include nature?

FIGURE 7.2
(on facing page)
An entry from The Oxford English Dictionary *(also called the* O.E.D.*), vol. XII, p. 300. Reproduced by permission of Oxford University Press. A supplement was published in 1933. A more up-to-date supplement is now in progress.*

While you are thinking about the poet's use of familiar words, also look to see what words go together in categories. Sometimes it helps to list all the verbs in a poem to see what kinds of actions the poem describes.

Another way to categorize the words in a poem is to see which ones relate in meaning. "Bosom" in line 5 should thus be associated with "suckled" in line 10 and "howling" and "sleeping" in lines 6–7, since all these words relate to the image of nursing a baby. Imagery means simply word patterns that make us see pictures or hear sounds. Whether you are an English major or not, a close look at words will help you to understand imagery.

If you are an English major, you may wish to extend your analysis to metrics and to other more technical elements of poetry. In that case, you

World (wɜ̄ld), *sb.* Forms: α. 1 **weorold**, **wurulď**, **worold**, **uoruld**, **wiarald**, 1–3 **weoruld**, **woruld**, **-eld**, **-old**, 2 **wurold**, 3 **we(o)reld**, **wæruld**, *Orm.* **we(o)relld**. β. 1– **world**; 1–3 **weorld**, 4–6 **worlde** (2 **worłł**, 3 **wurld**, 5 **whorlld(e)**; 2–3 **werłł**, 3 *Orm.* **werrld**, 3–5 **werld(e**; *north.* and *Sc.* 3– **warld**, 5–6 **warlde**, **varld**, (5 **warlede**). γ. 4–6 **wordle**, 5 **wordel**, **wordil**; *north.* and *Sc.* 5–7 **wardle**, 6 **wardill**, **vardil**, **wardel**, **vardel**; 3 **werdle**. δ. 3–6 **word**, 4–5 **worde** (6 **woaude**); 3–5 **werd**, 4–5 **werde**; 4 **wird**; *north.* 4, 6 **ward**. ε. 3 **worl**, 3–5 **worle**, 5 **worlle**, **orlle**, 6 **worell**; 8 **worl'**, *north.* and *Sc.* 5 **warle**, 8 **warl'**, 9 **warl**. [Com. Teut. (wanting in Gothic): OE. *weorold*, *woruld*, *world* str. f., rarely m., corresp. to OFris. *wrald*, *ruald*, *warld* (EFris. *warld*, WFris. *wrâld*), OS. *werold* (MLG. *werlt*, *warlt*, LG. *werld*, MDu. *werelt*, Du. *wereld*), OHG. *weralt* (MHG. *werelt*, *werlt*, *welt*, G. *welt*), ON. *verold* (Sw. *verld*, Da. *verden*): a formation peculiar to Germanic, f. *wer-* man, WERE *sb.*[1] + *ald-* age (cf. OLD *a.*, ELD *sb.*[2]), the etymological meaning being, therefore, 'age' or 'life of man'.]

I. Human existence; a period of this.

1. **a.** Chiefly *This world*, *the world*: the earthly state of human existence; this present life.

To (unto, OE. oð) the world's end: as long as human things shall last, to the end of time (with admixture of senses 7, 9). Similarly in phrases such as *as long as the* or *this world lasts*, and *in this world*.

832 *Charter* in Sweet *O. E. Texts* 447 Þet he ðas god forðieste oð wiaralde ende. c897 ÆLFRED *Gregory's Past. C.* xviii. 137 [Hi] ne doð him nan oðer god ðisse weoroldе. 971 *Blickl. Hom.* 57 We witon þæt ælc wiht...to ende efsteþ & onetteþ þisse weorlde lifes. c1200 *Vices & Virtues* 17 'Andswere me'...he wile seggen, 'hwat hafst ðu swa lange idon on ðare worelde?' c1205 LAY. 5028 Þa wifmon þa þe a ðas weoreld iber. c1250 *Kent. Serm.* in *O. E. Misc.* 33 Þet ha yef us swiche werkes to done in þise worelde þet þo saulen of us mote bien isauured adomes dai. c1250 *Gen. & Ex.* 32 Fader ...ðu giue me seli timinge To thaunen Þis werdes biginninge. a1300 *Cursor M.* 91 Quat bote is to sette traueil On thyng ...þat es bot fantum o þis world? c1300 *Havelok* 2335 Was neuere yete ioie more In al þis werd, han þo was þore. c1374 CHAUCER *Troylus* v. 1058 Allas of me vn-to þe worldis ende Schal noþer I-ben wretyn noþer I-songe No good word! c1400 *Rel. Pol. Poems* i. 123 They han here heuene in this world here. 1446 AUDELAY *Poems* 12 Ale the wyt of this word failid to foly. c1450 HOLLAND *Howlat* 43 Wa is me, wretche in this warld, wilsome of wane! 1451 *Paston Lett.* I. 189 In this werd that now is. 1513 *Life Hen. V* (1911) 22 Yearelie to be distributed...twenty pounds in pence to the poore people duringe the Worlde. 1570 *Satir. Poems Reform.* x. 36 He sall with vs rest, And we with him, as lang as warld may lest. 1590 SHAKS. *Com. Err.* II. ii. 108 Time himselfe is bald, and therefore to the worlds end, will haue bald followers. 1597 — *2 Hen. IV*, v. iii. 102, I prethee now deliuer them, like a man of this World. 1670 T. BLOUNT *Acad. Elog.* (ed. 4) 230 The Heir of a Knight in the right line shall be an Esquire to the worlds end. 1794 PALEY *Evid.* II. ii. § 8 A Christian's chief care being to pass quietly through this world to a better. 1797 JANE AUSTEN *Sense & Sensib.* xliv, 'As to that,' said he, 'I must rub through the world as well as I can.' 1856 DICKENS *Christmas Stories* (1874) 43 She was too good for this world and for me, and she died six weeks before our marriage-day.

b. With reference to birth or death; esp. *to bring into the world*, to give birth to (see BRING *v.* 7 c); *to come into* (or *to*) *the world*, to be born (see COME *v.* 4 c); *fig.* (of a book) to be published; *to go* or *depart out of this world*.

Beowulf 60 Dæm feower bearn forð gerimed in worold wocun. a1000 *Genesis* 2284 Þu scealt, Agar, Abrahame sunu on worold bringan. a1000 *Apost. Alex.* in Cockayne *Narrat.* (1861) 31 Din modor gewiteð of weoruldе þurh scondlicne deaþ. c1205 LAY. 17235 He sæt stille alse þeh he wolde of worlden iwiten. c1250 *Gen. & Ex.* 2584 Ic sal to nin sune fare...or ic of werlde chare. 1297 R. GLOUC. (Rolls) 5116 & þe nyentepe day of aueryl out of þis wo I he wende. (1382) c1510– [see COME *v.* 4 c]. a1400–50 *Wars Alex.* 2653 (Dubl.) Qwen he went of his warld. c1420 *Chron. Vilod.* 3953 Þaw y shulde now ouȝt of þis worde gone. 1579 RANDOLPH *Let.* in Buchanan *Ii Ks.* (S.T.S.) 56 The last little Treatise...that lately come into the World. c1588 *Cath. Tractates* (S.T.S.) 250 Not doutand bot angels and sanctis depairted out of this wardle may and do pray for us. 1607 [see BRING *v.* 7 c]. 1784 BURNS *Addr. Teleg. Child* iv, My funny toil is now a' tint, Sin' thou came to the warl asklent. 1914 'IAN HAY' *Knt. on Wheels* xiii. § 3 Having been born into the world with a club foot.

Various definitions of each word are listed chronologically with the earliest first. The earliest meaning of world is a period of human existence, especially in the sense of the earthly state of human existence as opposed to the spiritual. (Wordsworth refers to this early sense of the word in his identification of the world with materialism.)

These are the different forms and spellings of the word as it has appeared through the centuries. Deciphering this information will probably never be necessary for any undergraduate project.

Each definition is illustrated with a series of quotations starting with the first recorded use of the word in each sense. World was first used in the sense defined in 832 A.D. You can get that piece of information even though you probably cannot read the Old English quotation that follows. Since this quotation is listed under the earliest meaning of the word, you can infer that the earliest recorded use of the English word world occurred in 832.

may wish to consult a special text on the subject, such as James R. Kreuzer's *Elements of Poetry*.[3] Few freshman composition teachers expect you to write a technical analysis, and you should be able to create an A paper for most classes without consulting a special source on sophisticated poetic techniques.

You may want to find out something about the poet and about the time that the poem was written. Usually you do not have to look beyond your own textbook to find the date that the poem was first published—in this case, 1807. That piece of information will save you from talking about the poet's view of our materialistic nuclear age. The *Dictionary of National Biography* and other general reference works will tell you something about Wordsworth. You should consult these sources only to provide a context for your interpretation, not for research on other writers' views of the poem. You should use only those library materials that will help you to understand the words of the poem. You are then prepared to write your own interpretation.

Writing the first draft

You now have lots of notes, more than you probably ever expected to have on this short poem. You should also have recorded some ideas about patterns that you now see within the poem. In your first draft, you may find it useful simply to record in connected sentences all that you have learned about the poem. For example, one student wrote this first paragraph on an early draft:

> "The World is Too Much With Us," by William Wordsworth, is a traditional Italian or Petrarchan sonnet. The Italian sonnet usually consists of fourteen lines, divided into an octave and a sestet. An octave is usually used to raise a question or present a problem, and a sestet resolves or reflects on the problem.

The above paragraph, although it won't do for a final draft, is an adequate way to get moving on a first draft. By writing up the information from his notes, the student is also reflecting on this information.

It is probably a good idea in an early draft to discuss the poem line by line, quoting two-line segments and then discussing each segment. In this way, you will record your thinking about the poem. You can go back to select, rearrange, and connect on later drafts.

If your own habits of writing make it difficult for you to push ahead to the end of a first draft without revising, don't worry about your stop-and-go method of working. You may find that you need to go back and try a first paragraph as soon as you find what you want to say about the

3 New York: Macmillan, 1962.

poem. Whether you are a full-first-draft writer or a stop-and-go editor, your goal should be to find your thesis—the major point that you want to make about the poem—at least by the time you are ready to do your later-stage revisions.

Revising The student who drafted the above paragraph discovered that his major point was that Wordsworth used the form of the Petrarchan sonnet to express feelings about the world. The student then revised the pargraph:

> William Wordsworth in his poem "The World is Too Much With Us" has chosen the form of the traditional Petrarchan sonnet to express his feelings about the disheartening and declining condition of his world. The problem presented in the octave is that of being "out of tune" with the world. We are so caught up with money and possessions that we cannot see the riches of the natural world staring us in the face. The final six lines, the sestet, does not resolve this problem but instead reflects on the poet's desire to be a heathen raised on outdated beliefs rather than a Christian caught up in the drudgery of the modern world.

The student writer has used the knowledge that he merely recorded in the paragraph from his first draft to help him to understand Wordsworth's use of the sonnet form in the poem. The student also sets up expectations for the rest of the paper. He will discuss the poet's structural and lexical choices only when he wants to make a point about the way that those choices elaborate the theme as it is identified in the first paragraph. Consequently, the writer can go through his draft with an eye toward omitting unnecessary discussion from the earlier line-by-line analysis. He can also work toward making explicit connections between parts of his paper, since a line-by-line analysis tends in first-draft form to be naturally disjointed. He can also check to see that his concluding paragraph reminds the reader of what he has already presented, reflects on those ideas, and then suggests a wider perspective on the material. Here is the student's concluding paragraph:

> When this poem was written, the Industrial Revolution was just beginning. The poem, in a sense, is in the nature of a warning. But if we look around today, we can see that very few paid any attention to what Wordsworth said so powerfully in this traditional poetic form.

Perhaps the modern world can no more hear
traditional sonnets than we can hear old Triton
blow his wreathèd horn.

In this conclusion, the student has evidently drawn on his notes about when the poem was written. He may even have referred to his very early notes that helped him to verbalize his feelings about the poem.

Analyzing stories, novels, and plays

Getting started

When you are asked to write an analysis of a literary work longer than the poem discussed above, you will have to adapt the techniques that we describe. In general, however, your procedures can be quite similar to the process just explained. Once again, reading and thinking will be most important. Finding out something about the definition of the literary structure you are dealing with will be helpful. A respect for the words of your source will be essential.

You won't, of course, be able to look up all key words in a longer piece, but you may want to look closely at the use of words in important passages. The first and last paragraphs of stories and novels are especially significant. The opening lines and the "curtain" lines of plays demand special attention. It is always useful to ask why a writer decides to begin and end his work the way he does. Titles are usually even more important. A thorough analysis of the words of a title can lead you to an understanding of the work as a whole.

Reading carefully is still your best strategy, whether the work that you are analyzing is long or short. You should write as you read and reread. When you come to a passage in a novel that looks important or one that you simply like for reasons that may not be clear to you at the moment, copy the passage word for word in a notebook or on a notecard. Be sure to mark the page number for later reference. First of all, copying passages can slow down your reading in a useful way, since you have to stop and think actively about what you have read so far and also about why this particular passage has caught your eye. Second, copying the author's sentences gets you inside the author's rhythms and style in a way that almost nothing else can.

If you use this method, you may finish a four-hundred-page novel and find that you have ten pages or so of recorded quotations. You can then look over these quotations to try to see why you decided to copy down these and not others. You will begin to see patterns that you did not consciously notice as you were reading the novel or story or play.

Writing the first draft

Often you will discover the focus for your literary analyses by looking carefully through the passages you have recorded. Several recorded passages from Joyce's "The Dead," for example, may refer to water in its various forms: snow, ice, tears. You may then decide to write about water

imagery in "The Dead." You may then go back to the story and look consciously for passages that refer to water. You may also make random interpretative notes as you record pertinent passages. Then try a draft that moves through the story sequentially, discussing the water imagery as it appears page by page through the story. This procedure will produce a draft that is probably too detailed and fragmented, but at least you have something to shape and rework as you revise.

Revising The major job at this stage is to look for categories that transcend the page-by-page sequence of presentation in your first draft. You may decide to consider patterns of reference to water in its varying degrees of solidity—water, snow, ice—wherever they appear in the story to see how Joyce connects all these related images. Once you have discovered a conceptual, rather than sequential, pattern of organization, you are ready to write a thesis paragraph that articulates a controlling idea, which will then limit the detail that you choose to include throughout the paper. Try to summarize your major idea about the story as you would if you were teaching the story to someone else.

Writing an analysis of a performance

Sometimes you will be asked to write a paper about a performance of a play, concert, dance, or film. This sort of assignment can be exciting because of its immediacy, but the assignment can also be dismaying because you will not be able to return to the performance as you write about it. In fact, you will miss the most important and enjoyable part of the activity if you worry too much about your paper as the performance is in progress. Do not try to take notes in the dark. Use the assignment simply as a motivation to remain especially alert as the performance proceeds.

Getting started Remember the communal aspect of attendance at public performances and make it a point to discuss what you have seen and heard with friends. This is a time when a dormitory bull session is most appropriate. Your friends will have seen and remembered things that you missed, and you will no doubt be able to return the favor. Their reactions will stimulate your agreement or disagreement and may even make you want to write out your immediate responses when you return to your own room.

Before you go to bed, write as much as you can about the performance and your responses to it. Write as much as you can remember about the details of action, dialogue, costume, and set. You may not use very much of this material for your paper, but without some remembered details, you won't be able to write anything but vague generalities. If you have a printed program, use it to aid your memory. At least, all the characters and scenes are listed here. Also, keep in mind who has responsibility for what in any performance. If you recall, for example, that it is the director

who has final responsibility for most decisions in the production of films and plays, you will find a subject for many sentences that you might have been inclined to write in the passive voice.

Writing the first draft

Figure 7.3 shows some notes that a student recorded immediately after attending a performance of "The Moor's Pavane," performed by the Pennsylvania Ballet Company. The student used these notes to draft the following paragraph:

> The ballet primarily tells Othello's story of a man driven by consuming and uncontrollable passions within the framework of a pavane, a stately and ritualistic dance of the sixteenth century. Consequently, the dancer who portrays the Moor dominates the action on stage from the instant the lights go on, and he moves with deft, sure steps in his long, flowing red robes that split mid-thigh revealing red hose. Looking like a Moor with swarthy, nut-brown skin and flashing

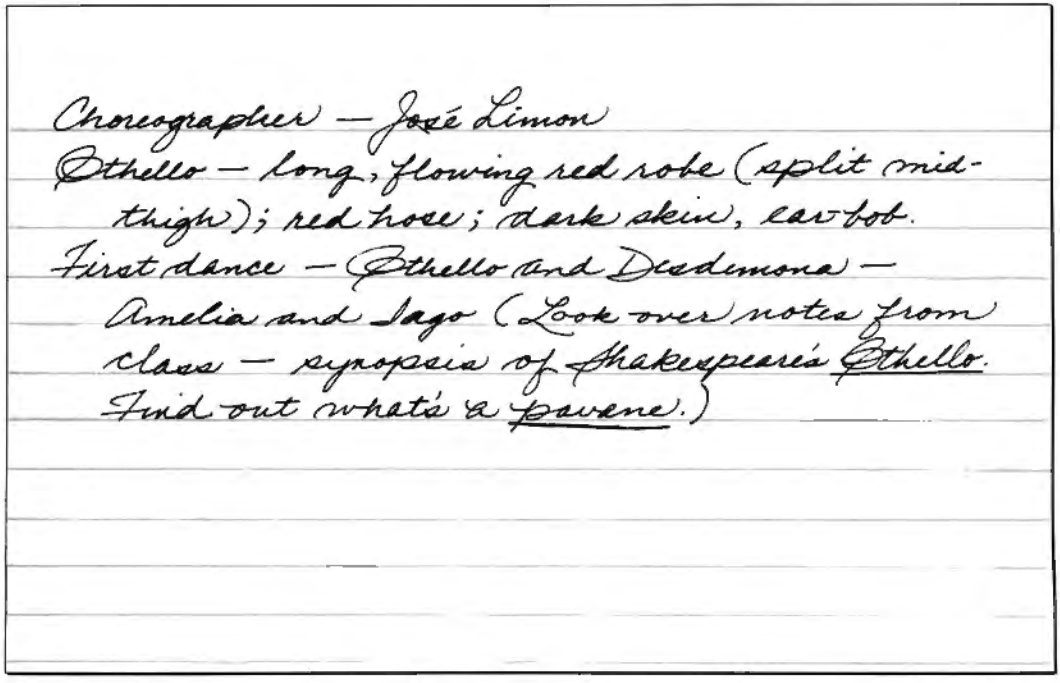

FIGURE 7.3

diamond ear-bob, his appearance strongly suggests that of a scorching flame.

The writer has made a good start here. He has generated a paragraph full of vivid detail. He hasn't yet decided on the focus for his paper, but he may not be ready to find a focus until he begins connecting sentences and paragraphs. Some of his sentences need reworking, but he can get the syntax under better control on a later draft.

Revising After trying a few drafts, the student decided that he wanted to focus on the way that the ballet conveys emotion through physical movements and theatrical effects. He then revised the above paragraph.

"The Moor's Pavane," choreographed by José Limon and presented by the Pennsylvania Ballet Company, presents the story of Othello, a man driven by consuming and uncontrollable passions. The pavane, a stately, ritualistic dance of the sixteenth century, provides the framework for the intense emotions of the characters. From the time that the Moor first appears, even his costume reflects his passion. He wears long, flowing red robes that split mid-thigh to reveal red hose. Because of his appearance and his movements, he dominates the action from the beginning.

The student's revision eliminates some detail: the flashing diamond ear-bob, the nut-brown skin, the scorching flame. The detail that he has retained—the red of Othello's costume—is used to highlight the point about the Moor's passion. The student may have needed all the recorded detail at an earlier stage in order to help him decide on a focus. Now that he has chosen his main point, he can be more selective and economical throughout the final draft.

Analyzing a painting or other graphic work

Suppose you have been asked to write a descriptive analysis of the watercolor that appears facing page 176. Students who do not plan to be fine arts majors may be as intimidated by this assignment as non-English majors sometimes are by the task of analyzing a poem. Once again it is important to remember that it is not necessary to write a highly technical analysis. Your major task is to look carefully and to classify what you see in the painting.

Getting started As you look closely at the painting, record your observations and your feelings. In every painting look at the artist's use of space. Is there a focal

FIGURE 7.4
(on facing page)
Preliminary notes on the Blake watercolor.

point? In other words, do parts of the work radiate out from a center of interest? Record ideas about shape and color. Note the proportion of objects and shapes. Write down your impression of the mood evoked by the painting.

The Blake watercolor clearly has narrative content, too, and you should find out something about the story that the painting tells. The subject is obviously biblical, but where in the Bible should you look? Now might be the time to check a few secondary sources for information on the artist, William Blake. You would then discover that Blake frequently based his paintings and lithographs on scenes and symbols from the Book of Revelation. In fact, in chapter 4 of the Book of Revelation, the depicted scene is described poetically in a way that must have inspired William Blake.

You may want to learn more about the significance of the Christian symbolism depicted in this scene. If so, look up some of the painted items—the elders, the rainbow, the seven seals—in a biblical dictionary. You might also want to look at chapter 4 of the Book of Revelation in the *Anchor Annotated Bible.*[4]

Figure 7.4 presents excerpts from some preliminary notes that one student recorded. This student has begun by noting down more detail than he will probably use in his paper. He has also summarized the narrative content of the painting, as it appears in the Book of Revelation. (Not all paintings have a narrative content.) In any case, most fine arts instructors will expect you to demonstrate your ability to *see* the visual elements in the work of art. So your notes on space, shape, color, and proportion are just as important as any background material that you find in the library.

In the case of this painting, the background material will probably help you to see the graphic elements of the painting in a context. For example, the focal point of this painting is obvious both from your seeing and from your reading. Everything depicted in the painting brings the eye to the divine throne. As a consequence, you may decide to organize your analytic description by beginning with the focal point or center of interest and then discussing the parts that radiate out from it.

In other works of art, other systems of organization may prove more useful. Edgar V. Roberts, in *A Practical College Rhetoric,*[5] suggests the following possible organizing principles: right, center, and left; up and down; foregrounds and backgrounds; earth, water, and sky.

Writing the first draft

You will discover the best structural procedure as you review your notes. Sometimes you will have to begin writing connected sentences before you will find a suitable organizing principle for your descriptive analysis. Since

4 (New York: Doubleday, 1964), pp. 69–82.
5 Cambridge, Mass.: Winthrop, 1975.

A picture of God sitting on a gold throne (center of picture). God has on white and light red robe. He has a long white beard and hair. There is light radiating from behind his head and shoulders. His arms are partially outstretched and in one hand he is holding what looks like a scroll with seven red stones running down it (possibly the seven seals?). The expression on his face seems rather sad and forlorn as though he has given up hope.

On each side of God there is a row of kings bowing and placing their gold crowns at his feet. All of the kings are dressed in white gowns, white hair and white faces — like ghosts.

God's throne looks as if it is placed on a slab of white marble or stone. The stone seems to be floating on water (gray). Below the slab at the bottom of the picture are the faces of seven young children. They are in the water but only their heads are above it. They appear to have wings though. The face, hair, and wings of the children are all white. The expression on their faces is, like God's, rather sad and unhappy.

Described in the Book of Revelation, chapter 4

According to Revelation, the figures of the ox, lion, eagle, and man are constantly saying, "Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty who was, and who is, and who is coming."

Whenever the four praise and honor God the kings cast their crowns before the throne. Seven angels hold the seven plagues that God sends to earth.

The Book of Revelation describes how John the Apostle witnessed Judgment Day. Blake's painting is what John saw when he first was called to heaven. It is the scene preceding the foretelling of Judgment Day.

the organizing principle of the Blake painting is so clear, our student wrote the first draft shown in figure 7.5.

To write this first draft the student has made some choices, as he sorted through his notes. He is focusing on the center of interest, the divine throne. But after mentioning the obvious placement of the throne in the center of the painting, he selects color as his primary area of discussion. As is often the case in first drafts, he has not provided a context for the descriptive analysis. The paragraph quoted above will not be the first paragraph of the final draft, but even in this early draft the writer has connected close observations of details of color to ideas about the general composition of the painting. In the process of revising, he can provide readers with enough background to make the analytic description more readily comprehensible.

Revising In the revision of this analytic description, the writer draws on his reading of biblical background material to establish the narrative significance of the painting, since the rest of the discussion will focus on the graphic methods employed to convey that meaning:

William Blake's painting "The Four and Twenty Elders Casting Their Crowns before the Divine Throne" is a description of the scene preceding the breaking of the seven seals in the Book of Revelation. Because the breaking of the seven seals signals the end of the world and the onset of the Day of Judgment, God on his divine throne is the center of attention in Blake's painting of this apocalyptic scene.

In this new first paragraph, the writer also immediately identifies the painting that he will describe. He then refers the reader to the Book of

---

Red and white contrasted against blue and gray.

The focal point of the painting is God seated on a gold throne. The two features that serve to make him the focal point are his position in the painting--the center--and his coloring. The predominant colors in the painting are blue and gray. God's coloring is pure white and pale red. He is wearing a white gown with a red robe over it, but the thing that is most noticeable about him is his white beard and hair, and the pure white light radiating from about his head.

FIGURE 7.5

Revelation, which is the source of the painting. In the last sentence of this paragraph he prepares for a transition to a discussion of focal point that he will develop in the next paragraph.

The second paragraph is a rewriting of the first paragraph of the student's earlier draft.

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Not only does Blake place the divine throne in
the center of the painting, but he also uses
color to direct the viewer's eye to this focal
point. God's red robe contrasts with the
predominant blues and grays of the rest of the
painting. But Blake's use of white is most
dramatic. God's white beard and white hair lead
the eye to the pure white light radiating from
his head.
```

This revised paragraph illustrates other principles of revision. The sentences in the earlier draft are disjointed. The writer recorded those earlier sentences as he thought them. In the revised draft the first two sentences of the earlier draft are skillfully combined into a *not only . . . but also* construction. The writer effectively uses sentence variety; for example, a short simple sentence at the pivotal point in the paragraph: "But Blake's use of white is most dramatic."

The writer is in better control of sentence construction and of the structure of the paragraph as a whole. The revised paragraph has a direction, from least to most dramatic use of color.

Control is the byword on a finished draft. As you check through your own, be sure that you are in complete control of the direction of your paper as a whole. As always, check to see that matters of grammar, punctuation, and mechanics are also under control.

Book reviews

In many humanities courses and also in courses in other disciplines, you will be asked to write book reviews or critiques. The book will sometimes be a novel, but more often it will be a work of nonfiction. The book review involves procedures of analysis, but in this case the analysis is usually used as a means of evaluation.

Getting started

Since analysis is a way of examining a problem by breaking it down into its parts and studying these parts in relation to each other and to the whole problem, you should familiarize yourself not only with the parts of the book (chapters, themes, arguments) but with their relationships. You should ask the following analytic questions:

- What are the purposes of the author in writing this book?

- What are the parts of the book? That is, how does the author try to accomplish his purposes?
- Does each part accomplish its purpose?
- Do the parts, collectively, accomplish the author's purposes?

Since the purpose of analysis in this case is evaluation—"to determine the worth of"—it is your responsibility to draw conclusions about the book. The type of evaluation you will make will vary with the assignment. You may, for example, be asked to evaluate the usefulness of a book for a particular audience or within a certain discipline. You may be required to critique the book on its own merits or in relation to other books on the same subject. At a minimum, you will need to determine the book's value to you. Do you think that the book is useful or important? In what ways does it please you or fall short of your expectations?

We emphasize the word "your" because a book review should represent your analysis and your evaluation. Many student reviews are unsuccessful because the writer is intimidated by having to critique a published work ("What can I possibly say about the work of a professional on this topic?"). True, you may not be able to review a book by assessing its validity and accuracy within the context of all that is known about a subject, or evaluate its use of unfamiliar sources or research methods, but you can decide if the book's purpose is meaningful to you and if that purpose is accomplished to your satisfaction. You can come to some conclusions about the strengths and weaknesses of a book in light of your reactions. Your views and opinions, if rendered thoughtfully and supported capably, are just as valid as those expressed in professional reviews.

A beginning point for writing a book review is to read some book reviews. Ask your instructor for advice on journals that contain good examples of reviews, or see chapter 4 of this text for how to find book reviews. You may not be able to emulate those professional reviews in style or sophistication of analysis, but they will give you examples of form.

Before you even begin to read the book to be reviewed, examine it. Find out when it was published. Study the table of contents to familiarize yourself with its organization (scope of the topic, chapters, subheadings, number of pages devoted to each element of the topic). Read the acknowledgments, preface, and introduction, for they are short essays in which the author speaks to the reader about the book. Find out if the author has included footnotes. If so, study the types of sources used. Look at the appendices, if any, to discover what the author felt was important enough to reproduce or discuss in more detail. Finally, scan the index to get a sense of what topics or persons appear most frequently in the body of the work.

As you examine the book, write notes to yourself about any features that strike you as possibly important. You will not yet know what you are going to write about, so keeping notes will preserve your impressions for

your later analysis—after you have read the book. For example, assume you are assigned to review Thomas S. Szasz's book *Ideology and Insanity*. By examining the book before you read it, you can learn valuable information that will allow you to direct your reading to specific topics and important themes. In the introduction to his book, Thomas Szasz offers a clear, concise statement of his purpose:

> In short, I shall try to show that the claims and practices of modern psychiatry dehumanize man by denying—on the basis of spurious scientific reasoning—the existence, or even the possibility, of personal responsibility. . . . psychiatry is . . . an ideology and a technology.[6]

From the index you can discover that the topics to which he probably gives the most attention are psychiatry, mental hospitals, freedom, and moral values. From the book cover you can learn that Thomas Szasz is himself a psychiatrist. This information will certainly affect your reading of the book.

As you read, keep notes! Even if you own the book and thereby have the luxury of writing in it, you should not rely on underlining passages or taking notes in the margins. Note keeping on cards or separate sheets of paper not only preserves significant parts of the book but, more important, preserves a running record of your reactions to those parts and the reasons you chose to record them. Remember, your review is going to be an analytical essay. You need to record your analysis of each of the parts of the book before you are able to analyze the entire work.

Your note taking, therefore, should be purposeful. First of all, you should not spend valuable time paraphrasing the entire book. What should you record? You will want to identify the author's purposes so you can refer back to them as you read. And you will need to record the most important ways the author tries to accomplish these purposes. Pick out a few salient themes and follow them through the volume, noting both the arguments and the proofs used to support the main thesis. You should build your analysis around these major points.

As you record parts of the book, you will also need to write down your impressions of how these parts are presented and the reasons why you developed your impressions. Good note taking is little more than keeping a running dialogue with yourself. Are you impressed with a certain argument? Do you wish that the author had given an example to support a certain point? Does the author make statements of importance without evidence or authority to back them up? Why does the point being made

6 Excerpts from *Ideology and Insanity* by Thomas S. Szasz. Copyright © 1970 by Thomas S. Szasz. Reprinted by permission of Doubleday & Company, Inc. p. 11.

contribute or fail to contribute to his developing argument? These and similar responses need to be recorded as you proceed. If not, you may well forget why you recorded whole parts of the book.

When you finish reading the book you should have a complete set of notes containing the major themes of the author, examples and details that illustrate strengths and weaknesses, comments explaining your reactions to these parts of the book, and your analysis of them. These notes will make it easier for you to move from reading to writing the review. Instead of rereading whole parts of the book and trying to find relationships, you should be able to put your essay together from your notes with only occasional time-consuming references to the book. Among the few tasks more frustrating than rereading an underlined portion of a book and trying to remember why you underlined it is realizing that a marked passage relates to another in the book and not being able to remember where the other passage is. Notes can be arranged, rearranged, kept in piles according to shifting topics, and annotated with directions and explanations.

For example, a student who is developing an analysis of one of Szasz's major theses—that psychiatrists make their evaluations on spurious criteria—might spend hours trying to find these two related, but physically separated references in *Ideology and Insanity*:

> It may be recalled that the American poet Ezra Pound had been . . . incarcerated in a mental hospital in Washington, D.C.

> In all, 2,417 psychiatrists [polled on Barry Goldwater's fitness to be president one week after his nomination in 1964] responded. By a vote of 1,189 to 657, the psychiatrists declared the Republican candidate unfit for the Presidency.[7]

Or a student might have notecards as shown in figure 7.6.

These notes, along with others on the general theme of spurious criteria, provide the material for the argument eventually to be presented.

Writing the first draft

With your ideas formed, your major concern at this point is ordering them and connecting them in a cogent essay. Creating a structure for a book review poses special problems. Too often a review simply follows the structure of the book ("First the author discusses. . . . He then turns his attention to. . . . His next point. . . . He concludes by. . . "). Writing from your own notes frees you from the tyranny of the author's organization and allows you to create your own ("The most important thesis of this author is. . . . It is not a convincing argument because. . . ").

If organization is the first requirement of structure, coherence is the second. Your structure must not only be logical; you must make very

7 Szasz, *Ideology and Insanity*, pp. 30, 204.

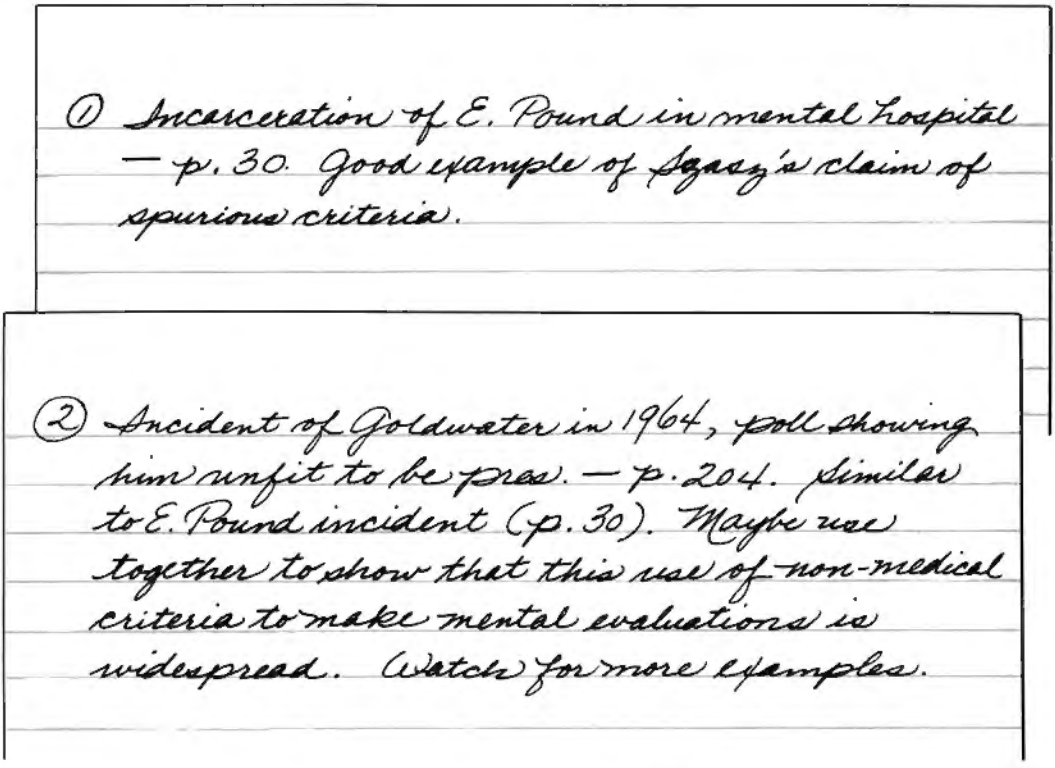

FIGURE 7.6

clear the connections among the various parts. Your first draft should be used to develop individual ideas with paragraphs and to relate these paragraphs to one another. In the first draft you are writing for yourself, so experiment. You may wish to begin by developing what you consider to be your most important argument or observation and then proceed to your other themes in order of importance. Or you may concentrate on developing your topic paragraph and relate other paragraphs to it. However you approach the problem of creating a whole paper, write and arrange until you are satisfied that all the points you wish to make are clear and can be followed by another person. If you can, have someone read your draft to tell you if your purposes are apparent and fulfilled. Tell whoever is reading your review not to worry about sentence structure, use of language, spelling, or punctuation (unless errors or imprecision detract from their understanding of your ideas), for these elements of writing are not your primary concerns in the draft stage.

Revising Now turn your attention to rewriting your paper to make your readers' experience with it as comfortable as possible. Once again, as in the papers of analysis, you should assume that your audience includes your instructor

and your classmates. But this time assume that your readers have *not* read the book but want to know if they should and if so, why, and if not, why not. Keeping these needs in mind, you have specific obligations to fulfill: you must decide exactly how to integrate a summary of the book into your review; you must refine your sentence structure and word usage for maximum readability; and you must make explicit your overall evaluation in your conclusion.

You will need to fine tune your case before you take it public. Base your generalizations on concrete evidence. It is not enough to write, "Dr. Szasz indicts modern psychiatry for eliminating moral considerations from essentially moral decisions." What are "moral considerations" and what are "moral decisions"? Look inside these code words to find out what Szasz means by "moral."

You also must decide the extent to which you are going to quote the book directly. Reviews that simply string long quotations together are unsatisfactory. Reviews that contain no quotations from the book deprive the reader of experiencing the tone and general flavor of the author's prose. Select the direct quotations sparingly and use them only when such use will enhance or illustrate points you are making. For example, the force of Szasz's indictment of psychiatry can be communicated effectively by using this sample quotation from his book: "Psychiatry is a moral and social enterprise." His own words convey the reasons why he is concerned about the problem: "In America, when the ideology of totalitarianism is promoted as fascism or communism it is coldly rejected. However, when the same ideology is promoted under the guise of mental health care, it is warmly embraced."[8] It is not easy to capture the intensity of his concern in paraphrase.

Lastly, the revising stage is the place to develop your conclusions. In a book review the conclusion should contain your specific responses to the requirements established by the instructor in the assignment. At a minimum, this response should involve an evaluation of the book's usefulness. Your analysis within the essay of the book's strengths and weaknesses needs to be pulled together into an evaluation of the overall worth of the book for the type of reader for whom the book is intended.

Since this evaluation, however subjective or idiosyncratic, must follow logically from your review, you might consider writing your conclusions last. They represent your final summation of the parts of the review and how they lead to the evaluation you are presenting. End strong! Do not simply repeat your earlier analyses. Draw them all together into a specific, concrete recommendation. Keeping the needs of your audience in your mind until the very end will allow you to avoid closing with that all too familiar undergraduate last line: "All in all, I liked the book very much."

8 Szasz, *Ideology and Insanity*, pp. 47, 48.

QUESTIONS 1 What is meant by a paper of analysis or review? How does this kind of paper differ from a term paper?

2 Why is it often necessary to do research for a paper of analysis or review? How do these research activities differ from the research activities necessary for a full term paper?

3 What are your major responsibilities when you review a book?

4 What are the major similarities and differences between analyzing a poem and analyzing a painting?

EXERCISES 1 Select a poem and analyze it according to the suggestions in this chapter.

2 Copy a poem or a brief but important passage from a short story. Did you feel that you became more familiar with the work after you copied it? Why or why not?

3 Select a book and write out a list of everything you could learn about the book before you actually began to read it for content.

4 The analysis below is of a poem by William Blake. Analyze the analysis. What is right with it? What is wrong with it? After completing your reactions to the student paragraph, write your own analysis of the poem.

The SICK ROSE

O Rose thou art sick.
The invisible worm,
That flies in the night
In the howling storm:

Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy:
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy.

Blake's poem "The Sick Rose" is a symbolic poem in two stanzas of four lines each. It is about beauty and ugliness. The first stanza is creepy and hard to understand. It uses a lot of negative words to convey a feeling of sickness, darkness, a storm and a worm, which stands for ugliness. The second stanza, in contrast, represents beauty through such words as bed and crimson joy, but ends on a negative note with ugliness winning out. The rose is destroyed by the worm, which is the way it is in life when the ugliness within us destroys our beauty. I didn't like the poem.