

# Language, Gender, and Culture

Reading selections for this module:

Tannen, Deborah. "His Politeness Is Her Powerlessness." *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*. New York: HarperCollins, 1990. 203–5.

Kingston, Maxine Hong. *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*. New York: Random House, 1976. 165–82.

Ehrlich, Gretel. "About Men." *The Solace of Open Spaces*. New York: Penguin, 1985. 49–53.

The three authors in this unit consider what our language says about culture and gender. Deborah Tannen is a sociolinguist who has authored numerous books on gender and language, including *You're Wearing That?!*, *You Just Don't Understand*, *That's Not What I Meant!*, *The Argument Culture*, and *Talking from 9 to 5: Women and Men at Work*. Maxine Hong Kingston is a novelist and nonfiction writer who, in addition to *The Woman Warrior*, has written *Tripmaster Monkey* and *China Men*. Gretel Ehrlich is an author who writes about the sensitivity of "Marlboro" men to help us reconsider the term "cowboy."

## Reading Rhetorically

### "His Politeness Is Her Powerlessness" by Deborah Tannen

#### Prereading

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##### Activity 1

##### Introducing Key Concepts

Review the following statements and jot down an honest yes or no response next to each one as you read it. Be prepared to share your responses with classmates:

- I prefer it when people whisper around me.
- I prefer it when people look me in the eye when we talk.
- I like it most when I am taller than the person with whom I am speaking.
- I like to talk loudly at parties.
- I appreciate when someone is at least a foot from me when we are in conversation.
- I whisper more than I yell.

## Activity 1 (Continued)

- \_\_\_ I like to be the center of attention.
- \_\_\_ I often wish I was more outspoken.
- \_\_\_ I consider myself a good communicator.
- \_\_\_ I always know when someone is angry with me—even if they don't say it.
- \_\_\_ I can tell when someone is being dishonest.
- \_\_\_ My facial expressions come across loud and clear to people.
- \_\_\_ I find myself telling secrets with my friends a lot.
- \_\_\_ I do not like to be in a crowd of people.
- \_\_\_ I speak to people but do not look at their faces when I talk.
- \_\_\_ I stand close to people when we talk.
- \_\_\_ I am more comfortable talking to one gender compared with the other.
- \_\_\_ I have more friends of one gender than the other.
- \_\_\_ I spend a lot of time on the phone with my friends.
- \_\_\_ My mom or dad say I am too loud.
- \_\_\_ My parents are affectionate with each other.
- \_\_\_ I find myself with my hand on my hips when I talk to someone.

When you have completed your answers, reflect on and write down your preferred pattern or mode of communication with others and be prepared to share your responses.

## Activity 2

### Getting Ready to Read

Choose two of the four quickwrite topics that follow and write your responses in your Language, Gender, and Culture Reflection Journal.

**Quickwrite 1:** One or two generations ago, men and women seemed to have firmer codes for how to behave: men could be loud and assertive, but women were expected to dress modestly and to use a feminine voice. Do you think these “rules” for male and female behavior still hold true today? From your own experiences and observations, what can you point to as support for your position?

**Quickwrite 2:** Families have their own rules for how male and female members should talk and behave. Think back to the advice you have heard in your family or to the rules you have noticed family members following. Describe the communication styles of talking and behaving for men and women in your family.

**Quickwrite 3:** Although tennis fans seem to find it normal that male tennis players grunt when they swing the racket forcefully, many sports journalists have complained that when female tennis players grunt during a hard swing, it is distracting from the game. What do you suspect is behind their objection? Explain your reasoning.

**Quickwrite 4:** How do American women typically speak in their conversations? Consider volume and pitch of voice, choice of words, body posture, closeness of speakers, eye contact, use of hands while speaking, and so on. Now consider the way American men typically speak.

### Activity 3

#### Introducing Key Vocabulary

What does the term “communication” mean? Do a search of the word’s origin/history. Then list what you consider to be effective means of communication and ineffective means of communication, using the following chart to help you organize your ideas. Share your list with a classmate or a small group.

<i>Effective means of communication</i>	<i>Ineffective means of communication</i>

### Activity 4

#### Making Predictions and Asking Questions

Look at Tannen’s title, “His Politeness Is Her Powerlessness.” What do you think her writing will be about?

Share your inferences with a partner or in a small group.

Now read the first paragraph, looking closely at the last sentence: “Often, the labeling of ‘women’s language’ as ‘powerless language’ reflects the view of women’s behavior through the lens of men’s.” What do you think Tannen means?

Share your predictions with a partner or in a small group.

## Reading

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### Activity 5

#### First Reading

Look for Tannen’s thesis as you read and jot it down in your journal.

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### Activity 6

#### Looking Closely at Language

In this exercise, you will be drawing vocabulary trees.

##### Tree 1: Indirect Communication

Consider the tree trunk drawn on the board labeled “Indirect Communication.” As a class, find some of Tannen’s vocabulary expressing this concept. Put each of the words on a branch of the tree, one word per branch.

Think of some words from your own experience that relate to the idea of “indirectness” and add those to the tree, one word per branch.

Finally, can you think of any film characters that embody these characteristics?

Discuss the different connotations of some of these words.

##### Tree 2: Direct Communication

Consider the tree trunk drawn on the board labeled “Direct Communication.” As a class, find some of Tannen’s vocabulary expressing this concept. Put each of the words on a branch of the tree, one word per branch.

Think of some words from your own experience that relate to the idea of “directness” and add those to the tree, one word per branch.

Finally, can you think of any film characters that embody these characteristics?

Discuss the different connotations of some of these words.

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### Activity 7

#### Rereading the Text

While you are rereading the text, write down the answers to these questions in the margins of your text:

1. In paragraphs 3 and 4, how does Tannen explain women’s tendencies to use “covert” communication strategies? Write down at least two reasons that the author provides.
2. Sometimes an author will debunk a myth (examine an assumption that many people have about an issue). Do you see Tannen doing this? Mark it in the margins.
3. Annotate the following items in the left-hand margin:
  - The issue or problem Tannen is writing about
  - Tannen’s main arguments
  - Examples Tannen gives
  - Her conclusion

## Activity 8

### Considering the Structure of the Text

Using your annotations of the text, outline the organization of Tannen's text on the board.

Discuss with a partner or in small groups your ideas of why Tannen devotes the majority of her article to analyzing women's speech. Does this rhetorical choice strengthen or undermine the persuasiveness of her argument?

## Postreading

## Activity 9

### Summarizing and Responding

1. Look over your Language, Gender, and Culture Reflection Journal. Discuss whether your ideas about the ways in which men and women talk have changed.
2. Write a one-page response to one or two of the following prompts:
  - A. Linguistic researchers, such as Tannen, have shown that male and female communication styles are different. Some have gone so far as to suggest that women could benefit themselves by learning a "male" style of communication, including, for example, giving direct orders, as Tannen describes. Such behaviors, these researchers argue, could help women to win the respect of men in the business world and thus advance women's careers. How would you respond to this suggestion? Consider to what extent your gender determines your answer.
  - B. Tannen states that "Only modern Western societies place a priority on direct communication, and even for us it is more a value than a practice" (paragraph 8). Brainstorm a list of examples that would support her contention that, even though we may value directness, there is plenty in our social behavior and relationships that would prove the opposite. Then write a response to the author explaining to what extent you agree or disagree with her on this point.
  - C. People often say one thing and do another. What does Tannen mean when she says, "Only modern Western societies place a priority on direct communication, and even for us it is more a value than a practice" (paragraph 8)? What does it mean to say that direct communication is more valued than it is practiced? Do you agree that we claim to value direct speech but often act otherwise? Give specific examples to support your point of view based on your personal experience or on your observations of others.

## *The Woman Warrior* by Maxine Hong Kingston

### Prereading

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#### Activity 10

#### Getting Ready to Read

In *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*, Maxine Hong Kingston recounts scenes from her upbringing in a Chinese American family. Kingston weaves together myths, dreams, and reminiscences to give voice to what has been silenced in her family and culture. The particular excerpt chosen focuses on Kingston's attempts to make sense of the acculturation process she experienced growing up and highlights the many dimensions of her identity as a Chinese American woman.

**Quickwrite 1:** Based on your own experience, how do quiet students get treated in school? What are the advantages and disadvantages of being quiet?

**Quickwrite 2:** Silence can also be seen as a form of power. Under what circumstances might that be the case?

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#### Activity 11

#### Making Predictions and Asking Questions

1. What can you infer from the title of the chapter of this text, "Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe"? Spend some minutes predicting what this chapter is likely to be about. Jot down these predictions in your Language, Gender, and Culture Reflection Journal.
  2. Read the first sentence: "When I went to kindergarten and had to speak English for the first time, I became silent." Why do you suspect she "became silent"?
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#### Activity 12

#### Introducing Key Concepts and Key Vocabulary

##### Understanding Historical References

Fold a piece of paper lengthwise to form two columns. On the left-hand side, write "give one" at the top, and on the right-hand side, write "get one." For each historical event, person, or term your teacher gives (e.g., "Japanese internment camps during WW II"), and without consulting anyone else, brainstorm a list of all the things you already know, writing down your existing knowledge in the left-hand column. After you make the "give one" list on the left, get up and share what is on your list with others and find out what is on theirs. Write down any new information you gain from your classmates in the right-hand column under "get one," along with the name of the person who gave you the new information.

## Activity 12 (Continued)

Once you have given and received information, discuss as a class the information you have compiled. If you gain any additional information from the class discussion, you can add that to the right-hand “get one” column.

- Japanese internment during WWII (paragraph 4): Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 during World War II, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which resulted in the forcible internment of 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry. More than two-thirds of those interned were United States citizens who had never demonstrated any disloyalty. Kingston writes, “The Japanese kids were noisy and tough. They appeared one day in kindergarten, released from concentration camp, which was a tic-tac-toe mark, like barbed wire, on the map.”
- Chiang Kai-shek (1887–1975) (paragraph 9): He fought against Mao Zedong in the Communist Revolution in 1920s in mainland China. He headed the Nationalist Party (Kuomintang) and formed a temporary alliance with the Chinese communists to fight Japan in the 1930s. In 1949 he fled to the island of Taiwan.
- Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925) (paragraph 9): He was the symbol and leader of the Chinese nationalist revolution, which overthrew the Manchu rulers. He sought to bring democracy, nationalism, and people’s rights to China and was named provisional president of the Republic of China in 1911.
- The Korean War (1950–1953) (paragraph 45): In the Korean War, North Korea, supported by the Soviet Union, invaded South Korea, which was aided by the United States. China was also drawn into the conflict. An agreement between the warring sides, reached in 1953, established a demilitarized zone between North and South Korea.
- Ghosts: In *The Woman Warrior*, Kingston uses the word “ghost” to refer to those who are outside the family fold. “Ghost” tends to be used as a disparaging term to refer to those who are ostracized or seen as inferior in some way.

Most unfamiliar vocabulary in this excerpt can be gleaned from the context, but you may find it helpful to explore or discuss these words:

- sullen (paragraph 21)
- guttural (paragraph 40)
- talk-story (paragraph 40)
- faltering (paragraph 40)
- arrogant (paragraph 45)
- sarcastic (paragraph 52)

## Reading

### Activity 13

#### First Reading

As you read through the article, mark in the text passages that seem to answer the following questions:

1. According to Kingston, what characterizes traditional Chinese speech, and what kind of talking is valued?
2. In the first three pages, the narrator describes the differences between American and Chinese schools. How were rules different in the two schools? Why do you think it was easier for the narrator at a Chinese school than at an American school?
3. What did the narrator learn regarding the American idea of feminine speech? How did she alter her speech in order to be accepted in the classroom and by her peers?

### Activity 14

#### Rereading the Text and Analyzing Stylistic Choices

As you reread the text, consider the following questions and record your answers in your Language, Gender, and Culture Reflection Journal:

1. Why do you think the narrator paints black over her pictures? About this blackness she says, “I was making a stage curtain, and it was the moment before the curtain parted or rose.” Once she took the pictures home, she noted that they were “so black and full of possibilities.” What do these pictures seem to say about her?
2. Given the narrator’s feelings about speaking and silence, why do you think she bullies the little girl in the bathroom?
3. How might you account for or explain the narrator’s mysterious year and a half of illness at the end?
4. Go back to the original predictions you made about the meaning of the chapter title, “Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe.” Then look specifically for references in the text to words such as “song,” “voice,” “flutes,” “sounds,” “silence,” and other related ideas. What do these words suggest to you? What do you believe they say about the narrator’s attempts to express her identity?
5. In paragraph 44, the narrator says, “*I hated* the younger sister, the quiet one. *I hated* her when she was the last chosen for her team and I, the last chosen for my team. *I hated* her for her China doll haircut. *I hated* her at music time for the wheezes that came out of her plastic flute” [emphases added]. What is the effect of using such word and phrase repetition?
6. Throughout this excerpt from *The Woman Warrior*, Kingston uses striking imagery and vivid language. For example, in paragraph 11, when her sister is called on at school to recite first, the narrator says, “I hoped she would not cry, fear breaking up her voice like twigs underfoot. . . . When it was my turn, the same voice came out, a crippled animal running on broken legs. You could hear splinters in



Activity 14  
(Continued)

my voice, bones rubbing jagged against one another.” What kind of tone do you hear in this passage? Find one other example of particularly arresting imagery in Kingston’s text and be ready to share with the class why you chose it.

## Postreading

Activity 15

### Summarizing and Responding

After rereading this excerpt, what can you infer that Kingston believes is important for young women to learn? Write one page explaining your perspective and incorporate at least one quote from the author into your text. Feel free to use your Language, Gender, and Culture Reflection Journal notes and your marginal annotations to help you get started.

## Connecting Reading to Writing

Activity 16

### Using the Words of Others

Look at the numerous references in both articles to modes of communication. Choose examples from Tannen’s and Kingston’s articles that represent each of the following ways in which one communicates: passive, polite, indirect, aggressive, powerful, powerless, and insecure. You may highlight the words or phrases in the texts. After you identify words or phrases from the articles that fit with each style of communication listed, write them in the appropriate box on the table provided, together with the paragraph number referenced in the text. Note that space is available if you would like to create another category of communication patterns.

	<i>Example from the Tannen text</i>	<i>Example from the Kingston text</i>
passive		
polite		
indirect		
aggressive		
powerful		
powerless		
insecure		

Choose one particular communication pattern and discuss what you mean by that form of communication. Base your explanation on the examples you provided from the texts and elaborate on those examples to make your point. Write a succinct and concise paragraph that explains the style of communication.

# Reading Rhetorically

## “About Men” by Greta Ehrlich

### Prereading

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#### Activity 17

#### Getting Ready to Read

When you think of the phrase “American cowboy,” what associations, personal traits, and images come to mind?

### Reading

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#### Activity 18

#### Looking Closely at Language

1. Listen as your teacher reads the first paragraph of Ehrlich’s text, paying attention to the author’s use of rhythmic phrasing and repetition.
2. Note the contrasts used to discredit common stereotypes.
3. Ehrlich puts some phrases in quotation marks in this excerpt (e.g., “strong and silent,” “rides away into the sunset,” “rugged individualist”). Discuss what or whom she seems to be quoting.

#### Activity 19

#### First Reading

Read Ehrlich’s essay and consider the main point she seems to be making.

#### Activity 20

#### Rereading the Text and Analyzing Stylistic Choices

Mark those passages that indicate the kinds of evidence and strategies Ehrlich uses to define herself as an insider in the cowboy world.

Here are several questions to help you consider this assignment:

1. Why might she talk about being in New York but missing Wyoming?
2. How does Ehrlich seem to want to represent herself to readers?  
What evidence in the text supports this view?
3. Who are her sources? (Whom does she quote?)
4. How does she use these sources to build authority and gain credibility?

Discuss your findings in class and record your insights in your Language, Gender, and Culture Reflection Journal.

## Postreading

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### Activity 21

#### Summarizing and Responding

##### Expanding Vocabulary

1. Using Ehrlich's text as a dictionary, make two lists of words in your Language, Gender, and Culture Reflection Journal. The first list might be titled "Traditional words used to describe cowboys," and the second list might be titled "Unlikely words used to describe cowboys." As you comb through Ehrlich's text, collect words and phrases that fall into these two categories and fill out your lists.
2. Review each list as a whole and discuss the kind of portrait each list paints of the American cowboy. What happens when you put the two lists together, as Ehrlich has done throughout her piece? How is this reflective of Ehrlich's larger rhetorical goals?
3. Now write a one- to two-page portrait about someone you know well. Before you begin writing, develop two lists of vocabulary about that person in your Language, Gender, and Culture Reflection Journal. Echoing the vocabulary activity you performed with Ehrlich's text, you might title the first list "Words that describe how this person is commonly perceived by others," and the second list "Words that reveal this person as a more multidimensional human being." In similar phrasing and style to Ehrlich's, use the word lists you have developed to introduce readers to this person as he or she is commonly perceived by others who may not know the person well. Then complicate the reader's understanding of the individual by using vocabulary and phrasing that offer a more nuanced representation. (For example, you may know someone who has a very gruff exterior but is a "softy" once you get to know him or her, or vice versa.)
4. When the portraits have been written, you might share them in pairs or small groups, or read them aloud to the class.

## Writing Rhetorically

### Prewriting

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#### Activity 22

##### Reading the Assignment

Carefully read the writing assignment provided below and determine the following points:

- Does the assignment involve multiple parts?
- Who is your audience for the writing?
- Is the subject already determined for you, or do you have some choices to make about it?
- Are you being asked to inform, report, or persuade in this writing assignment?

Activity 22  
(Continued)

**Writing Assignment**

**In a well-organized essay of approximately two to three pages, answer the following questions:**

Tannen, Kingston, and Ehrlich describe communities or groups with which you may be somewhat unfamiliar. These writers invite you to see the “inside story” with fresh eyes. They complete stories that may be only partially understood. Is there a community or group that you would argue also needs to be better understood? How is it typically understood, and what are the hidden realities that need to be made known? Does the group have a distinctive language style, use specific culturally valued objects, or dress in particular ways that communicate their feelings about one another or beliefs about the social world? Use specific details and examples drawn from your own experience or your observations of others.

Activity 23

**Getting Ready to Write**

Gather your answers to the various questions we have considered up to this point. Review your journal entries and read over your marginal annotations as you think about what your response will be.

**Writing**

Activity 24

**Composing a Draft**

Write the first draft of your essay, keeping in mind that the most important concern for this draft is to get your ideas down on paper. Try to use some of the quotes you gathered from Tannen’s, Kingston’s, and Ehrlich’s texts during earlier activities.

Activity 25

**Organizing the Essay and Developing the Content**

With your first draft in front of you, think about the following questions:

**Introduction**

- Do you need a question, a surprising statement, or some other “hook” to get the reader’s attention?
- Does your introduction provide a context for understanding what will follow?
- Have you given the reader some idea of how you are going to develop the essay?

**Body**

- Do you have topic sentences that present each main point?

Activity 25  
(Continued)

- Are the main points supported with evidence (e.g., facts, arguments, quotations, or paraphrases from the texts studied)?

**Conclusion**

- In your final paragraph, step back and show why your ideas matter. What's at stake? Consider what you'd like your reader to take away from your paper.

## Revising and Editing

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Activity 26

### Revising the Draft

The following activity, which you will do with peers and alone, will provide tools to help you revise your Language, Gender, and Culture essay.

#### Peer Group Work

Working in groups of three or four, read your essay aloud to other members of the group. Then complete Part I of the Evaluation Form that your teacher will provide for each essay.

#### Paired Work

Work in pairs to decide how you will revise the problems that group members identified.

#### Individual Work

Revise the draft based the feedback you have received and the decisions you have made with your partners. Consider these questions as revision guidelines for your individual work:

1. Have I responded to the assignment?
2. What is my purpose for this essay?
3. What should I keep? What is most effective?
4. What should I add? Where do I need more details, examples, and other evidence to support my point?
5. What could I omit? Have I been repetitive?
6. What should I change? Are parts of my essay confusing or contradictory?
7. What should I rethink? Is my position clear?
8. How is my tone? Do I need qualifiers?
9. Have I addressed differing points of view?
10. Does my conclusion show the significance of my essay?

Activity 27

### Revising Rhetorically

You will now write a rhetorical précis of your essay. For the rhetorical précis you will write a brief analysis of the content, purpose, and persuasive strategies of your essay using the pattern below:

Sentence 1: Note the name of the author, the genre and title of the work, and the publication date in parentheses; a rhetorically

## Activity 27 (Continued)

accurate verb; and a *that* clause containing the major assertion or thesis statement in the work.

Sentence 2: Provide an explanation of how the author develops and supports the thesis, usually in chronological order.

Sentence 3: Summarize the author's apparent purpose, followed by an "in order to" phrase.

Sentence 4: Offer a description of the intended audience, the relationship the author establishes with the audience, or both.

## Activity 28

### Editing the Draft

Now that the content is in place, it is time to work with the grammar, punctuation, and mechanics of your draft to make sure that your essay conforms to the guidelines of conventional academic English. The following guidelines will help you edit your own work:

#### Editing Guidelines for Individual Work

1. If possible, set your essay aside for 24 hours before rereading to find errors.
2. If possible, read your essay aloud to a friend so you can listen for any mistakes and hear the rhythm of your writing.
3. With the help of your teacher, figure out your own pattern of errors—the most serious and frequent ones that you make.
4. Look for only one type of error at a time. Then go back and look for a second type and, if necessary, a third.
5. Use the dictionary to check your spelling and confirm that you have chosen the right word for the context.
6. Use "reverse editing" to catch errors: Take a piece of paper and cover up all but the last sentence of your paper. Check this sentence for any mistakes; edit where needed. Then expose the sentence above that one and again look for errors. Continue reading in this fashion, sentence by sentence, back to the beginning of your essay.

## Activity 29

### Reflecting on the Writing

Writing often helps us focus our thinking so that we learn about things that we might not have noticed otherwise. Think about the following questions:

- What did you learn from writing this paper?
- What do you think you did particularly well in writing this paper?
- What aspects of your writing do you hope to improve on in future writing assignments?

# Evaluation Form

Based on the CSU English Placement Test (EPT)

## Part I: Revising Checklist—Mark the appropriate categories.

	Superior	Strong	Adequate	Marginal	Weak	Very Weak	Comments
<b>Response to the topic</b>	Addresses the topic clearly and responds effectively to all aspects of the task.	Addresses the topic clearly but may respond to some aspects of the task more effectively than others.	Addresses the topic but may slight some aspects of the task.	Distorts or neglects aspects of the task.	Indicates confusion about the topic or neglects important aspects of the task.	Suggests an inability to comprehend the question or to respond meaningfully to the topic.	
<b>Understanding and use of the assigned reading</b>	Demonstrates a thorough critical understanding of the assigned reading in developing an insightful response.	Demonstrates a sound critical understanding of the assigned reading in developing a well-reasoned response.	Demonstrates a generally accurate understanding of the assigned reading in developing a sensible response.	Demonstrates some understanding of the assigned reading but may misconstrue parts of it or make limited use of it in developing a weak response.	Demonstrates very poor understanding of the main points of the assigned reading. Does not use the reading appropriately in developing a response or may not use the reading at all.	Demonstrates little or no ability to understand the assigned reading or to use it in developing a response.	
<b>Quality and clarity of thought</b>	Explores the issues thoughtfully and in depth.	Shows some depth and complexity of thought.	May treat the topic simplistically or repetitively.	Lacks focus or demonstrates confused or simplistic thinking.	Lacks focus and coherence and often fails to communicate ideas.	Is unfocused, illogical, or incoherent.	
<b>Organization, development, and support</b>	Is coherently organized and developed, with ideas supported by apt reasons and well-chosen examples.	Is well-organized and developed, with ideas supported by appropriate reasons and examples.	Is adequately organized and developed, generally supporting ideas with reasons and examples.	Is poorly organized and developed, presenting generalizations without adequate support or details without generalizations.	Has very weak organization and development, providing simplistic generalizations without support.	Is disorganized and undeveloped, providing little or no relevant support.	
<b>Syntax and command of language</b>	Has an effective, fluent style marked by syntactic variety and a clear command of language.	Displays some syntactic variety and facility in the use of language.	Demonstrates adequate use of syntax and language.	Has limited control of syntax and vocabulary.	Has inadequate control of syntax and vocabulary.	Lacks basic control of syntax and vocabulary.	
<b>Grammar, usage, and mechanics (See list on next page for details)</b>	Is generally free from errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics.	May have a few errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics.	May have some errors but generally demonstrates control of grammar, usage, and mechanics.	Has an accumulation of errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics that sometimes interfere with meaning.	Is marred by numerous errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics that frequently interfere with meaning.	Has serious and persistent errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics that severely interfere with meaning.	

## Part II: Editing Checklist

Problem	Questions	Comments
<b>Sentence boundaries</b>	Are there fragments, comma splices, or fused sentences?	
<b>Word choice</b>	Are word choices appropriate in meaning, connotation, and tone?	
<b>Subject-verb agreement</b>	Do main verbs agree with the subject in person and number?	
<b>Verb tense</b>	Is the tense appropriate to the topic and style? Does the writing shift back and forth from present to past inappropriately?	
<b>Word forms</b>	Are any parts of verb phrases missing or incorrect? Are verb endings correct? Do other words have correct endings and forms?	
<b>Noun plurals</b>	Do regular plurals end in "s"? Are irregular plurals correct? Are there problems with count and non-count nouns?	
<b>Articles</b>	Are articles ( <i>a</i> , <i>an</i> , and <i>the</i> ) used correctly? (Note: Proper nouns generally don't have an article, with exceptions such as "the United States" and "the Soviet Union," which are more like descriptions than names.)	
<b>Spelling</b>	Are words spelled correctly?	
<b>Punctuation</b>	Are periods, commas, and question marks used correctly? Are quotations punctuated correctly? Are capital letters used appropriately?	
<b>Pronoun reference</b>	Does every pronoun have a clear referent? (Note: Pronouns without referents or with multiple possible referents create a vague, confusing style.)	
<b>Other problems</b>	Are there other important problems?	