Reading Selections for This Module


Reading Rhetorically

Prereading

Activity 1

Getting Ready to Read

Give One, Get One: List two to three ways that people can achieve true happiness. Then find at least two other people in class, and write down their ideas. Have each person initial next to his or her idea. Then report at least one idea from your list to the whole class.

Brainstorm—List two to three ways that people can achieve true happiness.

1. ______________________________________________________________
2. ______________________________________________________________
3. ______________________________________________________________

Rewrite one idea using the sentence starter.

Happiness can be achieved by

______________________________________________________________
Discuss your idea with three classmates of the opposite gender. Take notes on your classmates’ ideas, and put their names next to their ideas that you have written down.

_______________________________________ ______________

_______________________________________ ______________

_______________________________________ ______________

Report one idea that you heard to the whole class.

[Classmate’s name] pointed out that . . .

[Classmate’s name] claimed that . . .

For example: Luis pointed out that happiness is something that can be achieved by earning a lot of money.

Activity 2

Getting Ready to Read—Quickwrite

After hearing what the class thinks will create happiness, take a look at the following graph in which a total of 66 youth rated what they believe makes or would make them happy. After considering the graph, agree or disagree with the statement that people can determine their own happiness.

Happiness Survey Results: A total of 66 youth (35 Males and 31 Females), aged 11-19, were surveyed using questionnaires. Youth were asked to rate 16 items on a scale of 1 to 16, 1 being that which makes, or would make them most happy and 16 being that which makes them least happy. The following graph indicates the average results for each item:

![Happiness Survey Results Graph]

Overall, youth indicated that family (with an average response of 4.70) made them most happy, while popularity (average response of
10.80) made them least happy. Friends (average of 5.35) and grades (average of 5.67) were the second and third most influential. Retrieved from <http://1845.web10.elexioamp.com/encyclopedia/encyclopedia_content/happiness/research/overall_outsiders_survey_results>.

When you have finished writing, exchange responses with your partner. Write a response to what your partner wrote. You may agree or disagree, ask a question, or suggest additional ideas. When you have both finished, your teacher will share some of your joint responses with the whole class.

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### Activity 3

**Exploring Key Concepts**

Pairs Conversation: What is happiness? Spend a few minutes discussing your definition of happiness with a partner.

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### Activity 4

**Surveying the Text**

Before you read Darren M. McMahon’s text, “In Pursuit of Unhappiness,” just read the title, and jot down what you think the author means by the title. Predict what the article might be about based on your understanding of the title. Read the opening paragraphs after discussing the title, and add any new information to your predictions.

1. What does the title “In Pursuit of Unhappiness” tell you about McMahon’s position on what makes a person happy?

2. What do you think is the article’s purpose?

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### Activity 5

**Making Predictions**

Read each section of the text below, one at a time. Before you continue on to the next quote, answer these questions: (1) What do you notice? (2) What words and ideas seem to be important? (3) What do you predict the next section will be about?

1. “‘HAPPY New Year!’ We seldom think of those words as an order. But in some respects that is what they are.”

2. “Doesn’t every American want to be happy? And don’t most Americans yearn deep down to be happy all of the time?”

3. “The right laid out in our nation’s Declaration of Independence—to pursue happiness to our heart’s content—is nowhere on better display than in the rites of the holiday season. With glad tidings and good cheer, we seek to bring one year to its natural happy conclusion, while preparing to usher in a happy new year and many happy returns.”
4. “So in these last days of 2005 I say to you, ‘Don’t have a happy new year!’...If you’re so inclined, put in some good hours at the office or at your favorite charity, temple or church. ...With luck, you’ll find happiness by the by. If not, your time won’t be wasted. You may even bring a little joy to the world.”

 activity 6

**Asking Questions**

Write answers to the following questions:

1. What do you think McMahon will have to say about the American goal to be happy?

2. Why do you think the author spent so many lines introducing the American goal of happiness and then titled the piece “In Pursuit of Unhappiness”?

**activity 7**

**SOAPSTone**

Read each letter from the acronym SOAPSTone aloud, along with the explanation provided below. Then complete each answer here.

S represents the Subject, the general topic, content, and ideas contained in the text.

The article is about ____________________________.

O represents the Occasion, the time and place of the piece, the current situation.

The events which led up to the writing of this piece include ____________________________.

A represents the Audience, the group of readers to whom this piece is addressed.

From the words ___________________ and __________________ we can assume the author’s intended audience is ________________.

P represents the Purpose, the author’s reason behind the text.

The main purpose of this article is to ____________________.

S represents the Speaker, the author’s voice and persona he uses to tell the story.

From the words ___________________ and __________________, we can assume the author is__________________.
Tone refers to the emotional attitude a writer expresses toward the subject. We can think of tone as describing the writer’s “voice.” For example, the “voice” can be sarcastic, humble, bitter, or reverent. How do the repetition of the words “happy” in the first paragraphs contribute to tone?

In the introductory paragraphs, the author’s attitude is one of ____________________________.

Understanding Key Vocabulary

Read the definitions and sentences provided. Then use your knowledge of the words to add a synonym, a picture of the word, and a description of what the word is not (this last section may need the support of your teacher.). To demonstrate your understanding of each word, you need to use the word correctly in a sentence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Synonym</th>
<th>Description of what the word is NOT</th>
<th>A Picture of the Word</th>
<th>Sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>rite – a formal ceremonial act</td>
<td>ritual</td>
<td>a tailgate party</td>
<td></td>
<td>My friend is planning her confirmation, a Catholic rite of passage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>right – that which is due to anyone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>stagnancy – inactive, sluggish, dull</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>undermine – to injure or destroy, to attack by indirect means</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>resign (oneself) to – to submit, to give up</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pursuit – an effort to secure or attain</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reading

Activity 9

Reading for Understanding

Read “In Pursuit of Unhappiness” with your teacher. As you read, think about the predictions you made. You may notice words you worked with in the previous activities. Listen to your teacher’s “Think Aloud” about the meaning-making strategies used to understand the article.

After finishing the article, discuss the following questions with your classmates:

1. How accurate were your predictions?
2. When you read the whole article, did anything surprise you?
3. Are there any parts of the article you found confusing?

Activity 10

Considering the Structure of the Text—Descriptive Outlining

Chunking and “Does” Statements: Read “In Pursuit of Unhappiness” again, this time silently. Draw a line where you think the introduction ends. Then draw lines to “chunk” the body of the essay into logical parts. Finally, draw lines where you think the conclusion begins. As you reread the article, consider not only what each section says but also how it says it.

Now answer the following questions:

1. How does each section you identified affect the reader? What is the writer trying to accomplish?
2. What does each section say? What is the content?
3. Which section is most developed?
4. Which section is least developed?
5. Which section is most persuasive? Least persuasive?
6. From your chart of the text, what do you think is the text’s main argument? Is it explicit or implicit?
7. In what ways is the final paragraph a style imitation of the second-to-last paragraph?
Activity 11

**Noticing Language**

Look at the Calvin and Hobbes cartoon, and discuss why the comic is funny. Why does Calvin’s comment make the reader smile?

In order to discuss the varying degrees of happiness, you will rank the following words on a scale of 1 to 6, with 6 being the state of greatest happiness. Then share those responses with a partner and come to an agreement on a ranking of the words. That common agreement will be shared with the class.

- pleasure
- euphoria
- joy
- happiness
- bliss
- satisfaction

Activity 12

**Understanding Connotations**

What feelings does each of the following words or phrases from “In Pursuit of Unhappiness” create in you? What images or situations do you associate with each word or phrase? The first has been done for you.

1. yearn – craving that cannot be satisfied
2. unadulterated –
3. bliss –
4. stagnancy –
5. steeped –
6. relentless –
7. preoccupation –

Activity 13

**Annotating and Questioning the Text**

First Highlighting: Use a yellow highlighter to mark Thomas Carlyle’s quotes. Explain how these quotes support McMahon’s argument.

Second Highlighting: Use a pink highlighter to mark John Stuart Mills’ quotes. Explain how these quotes support McMahon’s argument.
Quickwrite

Answer the following questions in a quickwrite:

In what ways are Thomas Carlyle and John Stuart Mill similar in their thinking about happiness? In what ways are they different? What facet of the argument does Carlyle serve? What does the Mills quote provide to McMahon’s argument?

After you complete the quickwrite, go back to your chunking statements and see if you can add to them in order to reflect how the author uses the voices of these two men to further his own argument.

Analyzing Stylistic Choices

This particular line of questioning is offered to help you see that the linguistic choices writers make create certain effects for their readers. These questions are divided into three categories: words, sentences, and paragraphs. Please discuss the following questions in class, in a small group, or as an individual in a journal assignment.

Words

1. What does the word paradox mean to you?
2. What synonyms for happy does the author use in this essay?
3. What synonyms for unhappy does the author use in this essay?
4. Does the author make more mention of happiness or unhappiness in this essay? Why do you think so?

Sentences

The author makes a handful of statements that are surprising. The title “In Pursuit of Unhappiness” is an example of that.

1. Why does the author use this contradictory statement as his title?
2. What is the effect on the reader of that contradiction?

The author states, “But before we take such steps, we might do well to reflect on the darker side of holiday cheer: those mysterious blues that are apt to set in while the streamers stream and the corks pop; the little voice that even in the best of souls is sometimes moved to say, ‘Bah, humbug.’”

3. What is the effect on the reader of the imagery that author uses in those lines?
Paragraphs

In the introductory paragraphs, the author uses a distinct tone of voice. He states the following:

‘HAPPY New Year!’ We seldom think of those words as an order. But in some respects that is what they are.”

Doesn’t every American want to be happy? And don’t most Americans yearn, deep down, to be happy all of the time? The right laid out in our nation’s Declaration of Independence – to pursue happiness to our hearts’ content – is nowhere on better display than in the rites of the holiday season. With glad tidings and good cheer, we seek to bring one year to its natural happy conclusion, while preparing to usher in a happy new year and many happy returns.

1. Why did the author choose to write the first word in capital letters? And how many times is that word repeated throughout the introduction? What is the effect of that repetition?

2. Why did the author choose to open the second paragraph with two rhetorical questions?

3. What is McMahon trying to do in writing this way?

Throughout the essay McMahon frequently uses words that signal a switch in thinking, such as “That shift was monumental, and its implications far reaching. Among other things, it was behind the transformation of the holiday season from a time of pious remembrance into one of unadulterated bliss.” He also uses words such as but, yet, and despite regularly throughout the text.

4. What is the effect of these frequent switches?

Wrap up: Pick one of the passages above, and explain what the author might mean by it. Include the word paradox in your response. Write your response below.

Postreading

Activity 16

Summarizing and Responding

Five-Word Summary

Your teacher will now lead you through a four-step process for writing a summary paragraph for “In Pursuit of Unhappiness,” using key words from the article.

STEP ONE: Using actual words from the “In Pursuit of Unhappiness,” create a list of the five most important words. These should all be words that you think are essential to the article’s main idea.
STEP TWO: Now compare your five-word list to a partner’s. The two of you will then have five minutes to create a new list of the five most important words from the article by synthesizing your two original lists (you’ll need to make some cuts unless the two of you wrote exactly the same list). Be sure to choose those terms from your lists that represent the article’s main idea.

STEP THREE: Now, as a pair, join another set of partners to form a group of four. Each pair will share their five-word list; then the group of four will once again discuss which words are the most essential to the article’s main idea. The four of you will also have five minutes to create a newly synthesized list of five key words from “In Pursuit of Unhappiness.” While you can try to persuade your peers that your word choices are the best, your group must be in agreement about its final list.

STEP FOUR: On your own, use the final list of five key words your group of four agreed on to write a summary paragraph for “In Pursuit of Unhappiness.” Use all five words from your final list in your paragraph. Be sure to identify the main idea of the article in your summary.

Formative Assessment

Write a rhetorical précis of the article. A précis is a concise summary of what you’ve read including both what the text says and what the text does rhetorically. In other words, a précis presents the what, how, why, and who of a writer’s argument. Use the précis template below, as well as the directions provided for you (from Reading Rhetorically by John C. Bean, Virginia A. Chappell, and Alice M. Gillam).

• Sentence 1: Name of the author, genre, and title of the work; date in parentheses; a rhetorically accurate verb (such as “claims,” “argues,” “asserts,” or “suggests”); and a THAT clause containing the major assertion or thesis statement in the work.

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

• Sentence 3: A statement of the author’s apparent purpose, followed by an “in order to” phrase.

• Sentence 4: A description of the intended audience and/or the relationship the author establishes with the audience.
Thinking Critically

Discuss the following questions with your partner.

Questions about Logic (Logos)

1. Why does McMahon use the example of the holiday season?
2. In the third paragraph, what assumption about happiness does the quotation from Thomas Carlyle challenge?
3. According to McMahon’s paraphrase of Thomas Carlyle in the fourth paragraph, what caused the change in the concept of happiness? Why is this historical discussion important to McMahon’s argument?
4. What assumptions does McMahon make about the cause and effect relationships between self-help books and the percentage of happy people? Are there any factors McMahon doesn’t mention that might also explain the demand for self-help books?

Questions about the Writer (Ethos)

1. What is McMahon’s profession? Does that make him more or less believable?
2. What do McMahon’s references to Thomas Carlyle and John Stuart Mill do for his own image and credibility?
3. Why does McMahon make Thomas Carlyle’s views and personality such a prominent focus in his article? To what extent does McMahon seem to agree with Carlyle?
4. Why does McMahon say that “Carlyle’s arithmetic was essentially sound”? How does his verification of Carlyle’s claim that in 1843 the new preoccupation with happiness was “not yet two centuries old” contribute to McMahon’s authority as a historian?

Questions about Emotions (Pathos)

1. What feelings do the opening paragraphs create in the reader? Is there a genuine sense of “glad tidings and good cheer” in the first two paragraphs, or is something else going on?
2. In paragraph nine, McMahon describes the “mysterious [holiday] blues that are apt to set in while the streamers stream and the corks pop.” How does this paragraph affect the reader? What kind of sadness does McMahon describe in this paragraph?
3. In the final paragraph, McMahon lists several activities that he suggests are better ways of spending our time than trying to make ourselves happy, including having dinner with family, volunteering, or spending time with your child. What emotions do these examples create in the reader?
Other Questions to Develop Critical Thinking

1. What do you think Carlyle would say about economists Layard and Kahneman’s assumption that “gross national happiness” can be increased?

2. What does McMahon imply was the old, pre-17th century view of happiness? What’s your view of happiness?

3. What are the similarities and differences between “morally acceptable” and “commendable” behavior (paragraph 4)? Why do you think McMahon makes this distinction?

Reflecting on Your Reading Process

Discuss the following questions with a partner or in small groups:

1. What reading strategies did you use or learn in this module? Which strategies will you use in reading other texts? How will these strategies apply in other classes?

2. In what ways has your ability to read and discuss texts like “In Pursuit of Unhappiness” improved?

Connecting Reading to Writing

Discovering What You Think

Activity 20

Considering the Writing Task

Plan, write, and revise an essay on the following prompt:

I never, indeed, wavered in the conviction that happiness is the test of all rules of conduct, and the end of life. But I now thought that this end was only to be attained by not making it the direct end. Those only are happy (I thought) who have their minds fixed on some object other than their own happiness; on the happiness of others, on the improvement of mankind, even on some art or pursuit, followed not as a means, but as itself an ideal end. Aiming thus at something else, they find happiness by the way. The enjoyments of life (such was now my theory) are sufficient to make it a pleasant thing, when they are taken en passant, without being made a principal object. Once make them so, and they are immediately felt to be insufficient. They will not bear a scrutinizing examination. Ask yourself whether you are
happy, and you cease to be so. The only chance is to treat, not happiness, but some end external to it, as the purpose of life. Let your self-consciousness, your scrutiny, your self-interrogation, exhaust themselves on that; and if otherwise fortunately circumstanced you will inhale happiness with the air you breathe, without dwelling on it or thinking about it, without either forestalling it in imagination, or putting it to flight by fatal questioning. This theory now became the basis of my philosophy of life. And I still hold to it as the best theory for all those who have but a moderate degree of sensibility and of capacity for enjoyment, that is, for the great majority of mankind.


Explain John Stuart Mill’s argument, and discuss the ways in which you agree or disagree with his views. Support your position by providing reasons and examples from your own observations, experiences, or readings.

Activity 21

Taking a Stance

As you prepare to write, think carefully about your reactions to the various viewpoints you’ve read on the issue of creating happiness. Begin to formulate a thesis by answering the following questions:

1. What specific question will your essay answer? What is your tentative response to this question? (This is your thesis.)
2. Which views on creating happiness most closely mirror your own?
3. What support have you found for your thesis?
4. What evidence do you have for that support?
5. How much background information do your readers need in order to understand the topic of creating happiness?
6. If readers were to disagree with your thesis, what would they say? How would you address those concerns?

Now draft a possible thesis for your essay. As you write, be open to the idea of possibly changing your thesis as your argument develops.
Activity 22

Gathering Evidence to Support Your Claims

Look back at the evidence you’ve gathered so far over the course of this module. This includes your quickwrites, annotations, and summaries. For each piece of evidence, consider the following questions:

1. How closely does this piece of evidence relate to the claim it is supposed to support?
2. Is this piece of evidence a fact or an opinion? Is it an example?
3. If this evidence is a fact, what kind of fact is it (statistic, experimental result, quotation)?
4. If it is an opinion, what makes the opinion credible?
5. What makes this evidence persuasive?
6. How well will the evidence suit the audience and the rhetorical purpose of the piece?

Activity 23

Using the Words of Others

This activity is designed to help you become aware of how McMahon uses language to talk about the words of others. This can be done through direct quotation (saying precisely what the original author said), paraphrasing (providing a specific idea from another source but putting it in your own words), or summarizing (providing the primary ideas from a source in generalized form). For each of the following examples from “In Pursuit of Unhappiness,” identify the source of the comment (who said it), and decide whether the remark is a direct quotation, paraphrase, or summary.

1. Paragraph 7 – “Sociologists like to point out that the percentage of those describing themselves as ‘happy’ or ‘very happy’ has remained virtually unchanged. . .”
2. Paragraph 3 – “As Thomas Carlyle observed in 1843, ‘Happiness our being’s end and aim is at bottom, if we will count well, not yet two centuries old.’”
3. Paragraph 8 – “Economists like Lord Richard Layard and Daniel Kahneman have argued that the apparent stagnancy of happiness in modern societies should prompt policymakers to shift their priorities from the creation of wealth to the creation of good feelings. . .”
4. Paragraph 10 – “‘Ask yourself whether you are happy, and you cease to be so,’ Mill concluded after recovering from a serious bout of depression.”
Writing Rhetorically
Entering the Conversation

Activity 24

Composing a Draft

When you write an argument essay, choose an approach to the subject that matters to you. If you have strong feelings, you will find it much easier to gather evidence and convince your readers of your point of view. Keep in mind, however, that your readers might feel just as strongly about the opposite side of the issue. The following guidelines will help you write a good argument essay:

1. **State your position on your topic in your thesis statement.** To write a thesis statement for an argument essay, you must take a stand for or against an action. In other words, your thesis statement should be debatable—a statement that can be argued or challenged and will not be met with agreement by everyone who reads it. Your thesis statement should introduce your subject and state your stance on it.

2. **Choose evidence that supports your thesis statement.** Evidence is probably the most important factor in writing an argument essay. Without solid evidence, your essay is nothing more than opinion; with evidence, your essay can be powerful and persuasive. If you supply convincing evidence, your readers will not only understand your position but also perhaps agree with it. Evidence can consist of facts, statistics, statements from authorities, and examples or personal stories. Examples and personal stories can be based on your own observations, experiences, and reading, but your opinions are not evidence. Other strategies such as cause and effect, comparison and contrast, as well as definition, can be particularly useful in building an argument. Use any combination of evidence and writing strategies that supports your thesis statement.

3. **Anticipate opposing points of view.** In addition to stating and supporting your position, anticipating and responding to opposing views are important. Presenting only your side of the argument leaves half the story untold—the opposition’s half. If you acknowledge that there are opposing arguments and answer them, you will move your reader more in your direction. McMahon expresses the views of an opposing voice when he says, “Sociologists like to point out that the percentage of those describing themselves as ‘happy’ or ‘very happy’ has remained virtually unchanged in Europe and the United States since such surveys were first conducted in the 1950s.” In the following paragraph, he chose to include the opinions of Lord Richard Layard and Daniel Kahneman who argued “the apparent stagnancy of happiness in modern societies should prompt
policymakers to shift their priorities from the creation of wealth to the creation of good feelings, from boosting gross national product to increasing gross national happiness."

**Activity 25**

**Considering Structure**

Plan how you will organize your essay. You may consider the following organizational structure for your essay; however, keep in mind that there are many effective structures you could choose.

**Introduction**

- Background information
- Introduction of subject
- Statement of your opinion

**Body Paragraphs**

- Common ground
- Evidence (both logical and emotional)
- Opposing point of view
- Response to opposing point of view

**Conclusion**

- Restatement of your position
- Call for action or agreement

**Revising and Editing**

**Activity 26**

**Reviewing the Draft and Revising Rhetorically**

You now need to work with the organization and development of your draft to make sure that your essay is as effective as possible.

**Peer Group Work**

Working in groups of three or four, each student will read his or her essay aloud to other members of the group. Then students discuss the revising rhetorically questions below.

**Revising Rhetorically**

Write answers to the following questions to help you think about your audience, your purpose, your image as a writer, your argument, and the evidence that supports it.
Activity 27

1. Who will read your essay? What do readers probably think or believe about your topic? How much background information will they need?

2. What is your purpose in writing? What questions are you trying to answer? What are you trying to accomplish?

3. What sort of image, or ethos, do you want to project to your reader? How will you achieve it? What words or type of language might you want to use to help construct your ethos?

4. What is your main argument? What support do you have? What is your strongest evidence?

5. Are there any emotional appeals you want to use?

6. If readers disagree with your thesis or the validity of your support, what would they say? How would you answer them?

Individual Work

Revise the draft on the basis of the feedback you received from your group members and to clarify and strengthen each of the areas you identified in your answers to the questions above.

Editing the Draft

You now need to work with the grammar and mechanics of your draft to make sure that your use of language is effective and conforms to the guidelines of standard written English.

Individual Work

Edit your draft based on the information you have received from your instructor or tutor. Use the editing checklist provided by your teacher. The suggestions below will also 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 so you can hear your errors.

3. Focus on individual words and sentences rather than overall meaning. Take a sheet of paper, and cover everything except the line you are reading. Then touch your pencil to each word as you read.

4. With the help of your teacher, figure out your own pattern of errors—the most serious and frequent errors you make.
5. Only look for one type of error at a time. Then go back, and look for a second type, and if necessary, a third.

6. Use the dictionary to check spelling, and confirm that you’ve chosen the right word for the context.

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**Reflecting on Your Writing Process**

Reflecting on your writing is an essential part of improving on your next assignment. When you have completed your essay, answer these six questions, and submit your thoughts with your final draft.

1. What was most difficult about this assignment?

2. What was easiest?

3. What did you learn about arguing by completing this assignment?

4. What do you think are the strengths of your argument? Place a wavy line by the parts of your essay that you feel are very good.

5. What are the weaknesses, if any, of your paper? Place an X by the parts of your essay you would like help with. Write any questions you have in the margins.

6. What did you learn from this assignment about your own writing process—about preparing to write, writing the first draft, revising, and editing?