Juvenile Justice

Reading selections for this module:

Reading Rhetorically

Prereading

Activity 1

Getting Ready to Read

Quickwrite: If you committed a crime, do you think it would be fair for you to be punished the same way as an adult who committed the same crime?

Activity 2

Introducing Key Concepts

What characteristics make a person an adult, a juvenile, or a child? Who is a juvenile? What qualities are different for a juvenile compared with an adult or a child? Brainstorm a list of qualities that characterize a juvenile but not an adult or a child.

Definitions of some legal terms for killing someone are provided below. Study them and explain the differences in your own words. After you have studied the terms and their definitions, read the scenarios and complete the empty box in the table, “Matching Activity,” by filling in the legal term for the crime described.

Definitions of Legal Terms

Homicide is the killing of one person by another, either intentionally or unintentionally. Homicide includes accidents and murder.

Murder is killing someone with malice of forethought. It could be done while committing another crime. Murder is always illegal.
**First-degree murder** is killing a person with malice of forethought; the killing was planned. It was done deliberately.

**Second-degree murder** is a killing done during a crime deemed dangerous to a human life. The crime was most likely not committed with the intention of killing.

**Voluntary manslaughter** is killing someone intentionally but without malice of forethought. For example, if the killing was a crime of passion (killing a spouse or lover because of jealousy), the intention was to kill. However, there was no malice of forethought because it was not planned.

**Involuntary manslaughter** is killing someone unlawfully but without malice of forethought. It was committed without intent to kill and without a conscious disregard for human life.

**Matching Activity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actual situation</th>
<th>Crime or conviction</th>
<th>Punishment or sentencing</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A troubled seventeen-year-old girl has slowly poisoned her parents each night at dinner. After three months she came home to find them dead on the kitchen floor. The coroner’s report indicated that cyanide poisoning caused their deaths.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sentenced to life in prison without parole</td>
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<tr>
<td>Three sixteen-year-olds were hanging out at the park drinking whiskey. One boy started shoving his friend. Soon the shoving escalated into punching. One boy tripped, and his head hit a sharp-edged rock. The boy died before help arrived.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sentenced to three years in prison after being tried as an adult</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suspicious that his girlfriend was cheating, a sixteen-year-old boy went to her house and found her in bed with his brother. Impulsively, he grabbed the nearest lamp and hit his brother on the head. His brother died two days later.</td>
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<td>Sentenced to six years in prison</td>
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<tr>
<td>A thirteen-year-old boy broke into an auto parts business to steal hubcaps. The seventeen-year-old security guard picked up his boss’s gun and fired two warning shots at the thief. The second shot hit the thirteen-year-old and killed him on the spot.</td>
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<td>Sentenced to 15 years to life</td>
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Surveying the Text

Surveying the text gives you an overview of what the articles are about and how they are put together. This activity will help you create a framework so that you can make predictions and form questions to guide your reading. Discuss the following questions with your class:

- What do the titles of the two articles “Supreme Court to Rule on Executing Young Killers” and “Kids Are Kids” tell you the articles will be about?
- “Kids Are Kids” was published in *The Sacramento Bee*. “Supreme Court to Rule” was published in *The New York Times*. What can you predict about the articles based on their lengths and the lengths of their paragraphs? How do you think the articles will be the same? How do you think they will be different?
- What issue do you think these articles are going to discuss? What positions do you think Liptak and Lundstrom will take?

Making Predictions and Asking Questions

Listen as your teacher reads the first three paragraphs of “Supreme Court to Rule on Executing Young Killers” and then discuss the following questions:

- What do you think “Supreme Court to Rule on Executing Young Killers” is going to be about?
- What do you think is the purpose of this text?
- Who do you think is the intended audience for this piece? How do you know this?
- Based on the title and what you have heard so far, what information and ideas might this article present?

Now read the first six paragraphs of “Kids Are Kids” silently.

- What is Lundstrom’s opinion on the topic of juvenile crime?
- Turn the title into a question to answer as you read the essay.
Introducing Key Vocabulary

Create semantic maps for the words “juvenile crime” and “justice.” Begin by brainstorming a list of words that relate to “juvenile crime”; sort these words into categories, and label each one using the graphic below. Do the same for “justice.”

The words in the self-assessment chart are from the texts you will read. Predict word meanings and state how well you know the word.

Vocabulary Self-Assessment Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Know It Well</th>
<th>Have Heard of It</th>
<th>Don’t Know It</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vocabulary from Liptak’s “Supreme Court to Rule on Executing Young Killers”</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>constitutionality</td>
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<td>prosecutors</td>
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<td>alienated</td>
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<td>nonchalant</td>
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<td>plummeting</td>
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<td>culpability</td>
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<td>mitigating</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Vocabulary from Lundstrom’s “Kids Are Kids”</strong></td>
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<td>inconsistency</td>
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<td>quandary</td>
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<td>heinous</td>
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<td>coddling</td>
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<td>perpetuating</td>
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Reading

Activity 6

First Reading

The first reading of an essay is intended to help you understand the text and confirm your predictions. This step is sometimes called reading “with the grain” or “playing the believing game.” As you read, think about the following questions:

• Which of your predictions turned out to be true?
• What surprised you?

As you read “Supreme Court to Rule” and “Kids Are Kids,” you will find that the two articles discuss five recent cases in which teenagers were tried as adults for violent crimes. Fill out the following graphic organizer based on those cases:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Defendant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Crime</th>
<th>Sentence</th>
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Now highlight places in the text in each article where arguments are made for and against punishing juveniles like adults.

Activity 7

Looking Closely at Language

The following questions are based on the article by Liptak, “Supreme Court to Rule on Executing Young Killers,” and the one by Lundstrom, “Kids Are Kids.” Answer them orally and in writing:

1. Do you think that sentencing juvenile killers to the death penalty is a “cruel and unusual” punishment? Use “constitutional” or “unconstitutional” in your answer.
2. Should juveniles be punished less harshly than adults? Use “leniently” in your answer.
3. Describe the demeanor of a teenager you know. Do you think that such a demeanor would cause a jury to be lenient?
Activity 7 (Continued)

4. Do you think execution should be banned for some age groups of juveniles? Which age groups?
5. What factors do you think juries should take into account when they sentence juveniles?
6. Do you agree with Lundstrom that it is inconsistent to deny privileges like voting and drinking to teenagers but then to sentence them as adults? Why?
7. Do you think juveniles should be tried as adults if they commit especially bad crimes? Use the word “heinous” in your answer.
8. Do you agree with Lundstrom that the media perpetuates the stereotype of violent youths?

Reading Selections

Many Kids Called Unfit for Adult Trial
Startling Finds on Teenage Brains

Prereading and First Reading

Your teacher will ask you to read two new articles, “Many Kids Called Unfit for Adult Trial” and “Startling Finds on Teenage Brains,” using many of the same strategies you did for the first two articles.

Activity 8

Rereading the Text

In the initial reading, you read “with the grain,” playing the “believing game.” In the second reading, you should read “against the grain,” playing the “doubting game.” As you reread “Many Kids Called Unfit for Adult Trial” and “Startling Finds on Teenage Brains,” make marginal notations.

1. Label the following in the left-hand margin:
   • The introduction
   • The issue or problem the author is writing about
   • The author’s main arguments
   • The author’s examples
   • The author’s conclusion

2. In the right-hand margin, write your reactions to what the author is saying. You can ask questions, express surprise, disagree, elaborate, and note any moments of confusion.

3. As a class, discuss the annotation you and your classmates made on the first article. Now repeat this process for the second article. When you finish, exchange your copy with a partner. Read your partner’s annotations, and then talk about what you chose to mark and how you reacted to the text. Did you agree on what the main idea was?
Analyzing Stylistic Choices

The choices writers make when they choose words and construct sentences create certain effects for their readers. “Startling Finds on Teenage Brains” is about scientific research conducted at UCLA and the National Institutes of Health, but Thompson does not use dry, scientific language. Discuss why Thompson chose the following words to describe teenage behavior and what happens to teenage brains.

Words

Paragraph 7
Massive
Wildfire
Purged
Violent passions
Rash actions
Vastly immature

Paragraph 9
Erratic behavior

Paragraph 10
Maelstrom
Reckless actions
Startling
Delicate
Drastic

Sentences

Thompson’s sentences are fairly long and complex, but the last sentence in paragraph 6 is “So far, all well and good.” Why is this sentence so short?

Considering the Structure of the Text

Create a descriptive outline of “Startling Finds on Teenage Brains” by describing the content and purpose of each section. The first section has been done as an example.

Startling Finds on Teenage Brains
by Paul Thompson
The Sacramento Bee, Friday, 25 May 2001

1 Emotions ran high at the trial of Nathaniel Brazill in West Palm Beach, Fla., two weeks ago. Friends of slain teacher Barry Grunow called for the death penalty, while a growing crowd of demonstrators outside the courthouse wielded hastily written placards reading, “A child is not a man.” Jurors returned with their verdict May 16: Fourteen-year-old Brazill, charged in last
May’s shooting of middle-school teacher Grunow, was found guilty of second-degree murder.

2 A Florida grand jury had previously ruled that Brazill, who frequently looked dazed during the trial, would be tried as an adult, and if he had been convicted of first-degree murder he would have faced life in prison without parole. But Brazill’s immaturity was evident throughout this incident—from the act itself of Brazill’s shooting a teacher he considered one of his favorites, to his subsequent inability to give a reason for doing so, to the various quizzical looks that came across his face as the verdicts were read.

3 In terms of cognitive development, as research on the human brain has shown, Brazill—and any other young teen—is far from adulthood.

Content and Purpose: Nathaniel Brazill, a fourteen-year-old, was tried as an adult and found guilty of second-degree murder in the killing of his teacher. But research on the brain has shown that young teens are not adults in terms of development. The purpose is to raise the question of whether teenagers should be tried as adults.

4 Over the last several years, as school shootings have seemed to occur with disturbing frequency, startling discoveries have emerged about the teenage brain. The White House held a televised conference on adolescent development in May of last year, and a flurry of papers on the teen brain has appeared in top science journals. Reporters and teen advocates ask: Do the studies help explain the impulsive, erratic behavior of teens? The biggest surprise in recent teen-brain research is the finding that a massive loss of brain tissue occurs in the teen years.

Content and Purpose:

5 Specifically, my own research group at the University of California, Los Angeles, and our colleagues at the National Institutes of Health have developed technology to map the patterns of brain growth in individual children and teenagers. With repeated brain scans of kids from 3 to 20, we pieced together “movies” showing how brains grow and change.
6 Some changes make perfect sense: Language systems grow furiously until age twelve and then stop, coinciding with the time when children learn foreign languages fastest. Mathematical brain systems grow little until puberty, corresponding with the observation that kids have difficulty with abstract concepts before then. Basically, the brain is like a puzzle, and growth is fastest in the exact parts the kids need to learn skills at different times. So far, all well and good.

7 But what really caught our eye was a massive loss of brain tissue that occurs in the teenage years. The loss was like a wildfire, and you could see it in every teenager. Gray matter, which brain researchers believe supports all our thinking and emotions, is purged at a rate of 1 percent to 2 percent a year during this period. Stranger still, brain cells and connections are only being lost in the areas controlling impulses, risk-taking, and self-control. These frontal lobes, which inhibit our violent passions, rash actions, and regulate our emotions, are vastly immature throughout the teenage years.

Content and Purpose:

8 The implications are tantalizing. Brazill was only thirteen when he committed his crime. He said he made a “stupid mistake,” but prosecutors argued that by bringing a gun to school he planned the crime.

9 Does “planning” mean the same thing for a thirteen-year-old, with his diminished capacity for controlling erratic behavior, as it means for an adult? The verdict, in this case, seems to line up with the research. The jurors, by returning a verdict of second-degree murder instead of first, indicated that they believe Brazill’s actions, while not accidental, were not fully thought-out, either.

Content and Purpose:
Linking this maelstrom of normal brain change with legal or moral accountability is tough: Even though normal teens are experiencing a wildfire of tissue loss in their brains, that does not remove their accountability. What is clear from the research is that the parts of the frontal lobes that inhibit reckless actions restructure themselves with startling speed in the teen years. Given this delicate—and drastic—reshaping of the brain, teens need all the help they can get to steer their development onto the right path.

While research on brain-tissue loss can help us to understand teens better, it cannot be used to excuse their violent or homicidal behavior. But it can be used as evidence that teenagers are not yet adults, and the legal system shouldn’t treat them as such.

Paul Thompson is an assistant professor of neurology at the University of California, Los Angeles, School of Medicine.

**Postreading**

**Activity 11**

**Summarizing and Responding**

Write a summary of “Many Kids Called Unfit for Adult Trial” by Greg Krikorian.

**Activity 12**

**Web Work**

Do a Web search for Proposition 21, the California proposition that gave prosecutors the power to decide whether juveniles should be charged as adults for certain crimes. Read the arguments for and against the proposition, and then consider the questions in the next activity about Krikorian and Thompson’s articles so you can see a range of possible arguments.

**Activity 13**

**Thinking Critically**

In your group, answer the following questions about the traditional rhetorical appeals that Greg Krikorian makes in “Many Kids Called Unfit for Adult Trial.” Write down your group’s answers so you can share them with your classmates.

**Group 1**

**Questions about Logic (Logos)**

1. What are Krikorian’s major claims and assertions? Do you agree with his claims?
2. Are any of his claims weak or unsupported? Which claims, and why?
Activity 13 (Continued)

3. Can you think of counterarguments that Krikorian does not consider?
4. Do you think Krikorian left something out on purpose? Why?

Questions about the Writer (Ethos)
1. Krikorian is reporting on a study by Thomas Grisso. What is Grisso’s background? Do you think he is trustworthy?
2. Krikorian also quotes Laurence Steinberg. Who is he? Is he a reliable person to interpret what the study means?
3. Krikorian is a staff writer for the Los Angeles Times who frequently writes about legal issues. Does he seem trustworthy to write about this topic? Why or why not?
4. Can you tell what Krikorian’s point of view is, or can you tell only the point of view of the author of the study?

Questions about Emotions (Pathos)
1. Does “Many Kids” affect you emotionally? Which parts?
2. Do you think Krikorian is trying to manipulate your emotions? In what ways? At what point?
3. Do your emotions conflict with the logical interpretation of the arguments?

Group 2

Questions about Logic (Logos)
1. What are Thompson’s major claims and assertions? Do you agree with his claims?
2. Are any of his claims weak or unsupported? Which claims, and why?
3. Can you think of counterarguments that Thompson does not consider?

Questions about the Writer (Ethos)
1. What is Thompson’s background? Do you think he is trustworthy?
2. Does Thompson seem deceptive? Why or why not?
3. Can you tell what Thompson’s point of view is?

Questions about Emotions (Pathos)
1. Does “Startling Finds” affect you emotionally? Which parts?
2. Do you think Thompson is trying to manipulate your emotions? In what ways? At what point?
3. Do your emotions conflict with the logical interpretation of the arguments?
Using the Words of Others

One of the most important features of academic writing is the use of the words and ideas from written sources to support your own points. Essentially, there are three ways to incorporate words and ideas from sources into your own writing:

1. Direct quotation. Paul Thompson says, “The biggest surprise in recent teen-brain research is the finding that a massive loss of brain tissue occurs in the teen years.”

2. Paraphrase. In “Startling Finds on Teenage Brains,” Paul Thompson notes that teenagers actually lose brain tissue, a finding that may explain their impulsive behavior.

3. Summary. In “Startling Finds on Teenage Brains,” Paul Thompson summarizes recent research that shows teenagers actually lose brain tissue, a finding that may explain their impulsive and violent behavior. Such changes in the brain do not mean that teens are not responsible for their violent behavior, but Thompson believes they should not be treated as adults in the criminal justice system.

Documentation. You will also need to learn to take notes with full citation information. For print material you need to record at least the author’s name, title of the publication, city of publication, publisher, date, and page number.

The two most common documentation formats are the Modern Language Association (MLA) format, used mainly by English departments, and the American Psychological Association format.

MLA Format

Books. Here is a citation in MLA format for a typical book:


Newspapers. Here is the bibliographic information for the Thompson article in MLA format. The fact that it was published in a newspaper changes the format and the information slightly:


Web Sites. You might also want to incorporate material from Web sites. To document a Web site, you need to record the author’s name (if known), the title of the site (or a description like “Homepage,” if no title is available), the date of publication or most recent update (if known), the name of the organization that sponsors the site, the date of access, and the Web address (URL) in angle brackets. For example:
Activity 14 (Continued)


Because the name of the author is unknown for the above site, it is left out. This entry would appear in the Works Cited section, alphabetized as Primary Election.

**In-Text Documentation.** The MLA style also requires in-text documentation for every direct quotation, indirect quotation, paraphrase, or summary. If the author’s name is given in the text, the page number should be furnished in parentheses at the end of the sentence containing the material. An example of paraphrased material from Thompson’s article on teenage brain research follows. Because the author is not named in the text, the last name goes in the parentheses; since the article is short, no page numbers are needed:

“Although the rise in teenage crime is alarming, it should not cause states to toughen their laws so that even young teens are treated like adults in the criminal justice system. Recent research on teenage brains shows that the areas of the brain that control decision-making undergo a loss of brain tissue which supports the argument that teenagers are different from adults and should be treated more leniently” (Thompson).

**Practice with Sources.** Choose three passages from the text you are reading that you might be able to use in an essay. First, write down each passage as a correctly punctuated direct quotation. Second, paraphrase the material in your own words. Finally, respond to the idea expressed in the passage by agreeing or disagreeing with it and explaining why. Now you are ready to use this material in an essay.

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**Writing Rhetorically**

**Prewriting**

Activity 15

**Reading the Assignment**

Reading the assignment carefully to ensure you address all aspects of the prompt is critical.

**Writing Assignment**

Should teenagers accused of violent crimes be tried and sentenced as adults? Why or why not?

Be sure to refer to and cite the readings and your Web-based research. You may also use examples from your personal experience or observations.
Activity 15 (Continued)

Take the following steps for this exercise:

- Read the assignment carefully.
- Decide which issue you are going to discuss.
- Discuss the purpose of the assignment. What will you try to accomplish in your essay?

Activity 16

Getting Ready to Write

The following exercise will help you move from reading to writing.

Consult newspapers and other documents on the Internet to find out the current status of the issue of trying and sentencing juveniles. What aspects of the issue are currently in the news? Why is it still important? Why do people care about it? Based on the articles you read as part of this assignment and on your own research, how do you think the issue should be resolved?

Activity 17

Formulating a Working Thesis

Writing down a tentative thesis at this point is a good habit to develop in your writing process. Your thesis should be a complete sentence and can be revised several times. A focused thesis statement will keep your writing on track.

Record your responses to the following questions in preparation for writing a tentative thesis statement:

1. What specific question will your essay address? What is your response to this question? (This is your tentative thesis.)
2. What support have you found for your thesis?
3. What evidence have you found for this support? (Examples are facts, statistics, authorities, personal experience, anecdotes, stories, and scenarios.)
4. How much background information do your readers need to understand your topic and thesis?
5. If readers were to disagree with your thesis or the validity of your support, what might they say? How would you address their concerns (what would you say to them)?

Now draft a possible thesis for your essay.
Writing

Activity 18

Composing a Draft

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

As an example, Paul Thompson’s thesis is partially stated and partially implied in the third paragraph:

“In terms of cognitive development, as research on the human brain has shown, Brazill—and any other young teen—is far from adulthood” (and therefore teens shouldn’t be treated as adults in the justice system).

Is Your Thesis Debatable?

- **Not debatable.** Teenagers in Florida can face life in prison if convicted of first-degree murder.
- **Not debatable.** Studies explore the impulsive, erratic behavior of teens.

Although a writer’s thesis usually comes in the first few paragraphs of an essay, Thompson is an example of a professional writer who does not state his thesis explicitly until the concluding paragraph. He does not reach his thesis until the final paragraph, where he concludes that (based on his research) teenage criminals should not be treated like adults. However, a reader can infer what Thompson’s thesis will be from the quoted part of paragraph three (“In terms of cognitive development, as research on the human brain has shown, Brazill—and any other young teen—is far from adulthood”). The focus of the essay is consistent from the beginning even though the reader does not reach the thesis until the end.

2. **Find out as much as you can about your audience before you write.** Knowing your readers’ background and feelings on your topic will help you choose the best supporting evidence and examples.
Thompson’s essay was first published in *The Sacramento Bee*, which addresses a fairly educated California audience. However, most of the paper’s readers are not doctors or researchers, so Thompson summarizes his research in an informal style and in terms that can be understood by any educated person. If he had been writing for a science journal, he would have used technical language and a more formal tone.

3. **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 it, your essay can be powerful and persuasive. If you supply convincing evidence, your readers will not only understand your position but may even 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 comparison/contrast, definition, and cause and effect, can be particularly useful in building an argument. Use any combination of evidence and writing strategies that supports your thesis statement.

In his essay, Thompson uses several different types of evidence. Here are some examples:

**Facts**

“Fourteen-year-old Brazill, charged in last May’s shooting of middle-school teacher Grunow, was found guilty of second-degree murder” (paragraph 1).

“Mathematical brain systems grow little until puberty, corresponding with the observation that kids have difficulty with abstract concepts until then” (paragraph 6).

**Statistics**

“Gray matter, which brain researchers believe supports all our thinking and emotions, is purged at a rate of 1 percent to 2 percent a year during this period” (paragraph 7).

**Reference to Authorities**

“Specifically, my own research group at the University of California, Los Angeles, and our colleagues at the National Institutes of Health have developed technology to map the patterns of brain growth in individual children and teenagers” (paragraph 5).

**Examples and Personal Stories**

Story about Nathaniel Brazill (paragraphs 1 and 2)

4. **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 opposing arguments and answer them, your argument is strengthened.

In paragraph 10, Thompson admits that “linking this maelstrom of normal brain change with accountability is tough.” This statement raises Thompson’s credibility and then lets him counter the claim that normal teens, who also experience brain loss, do not commit murder. This leads to the more nuanced conclusion that teens should be held accountable but not be treated like adults.

5. **Maintain a reasonable tone.** Just as you probably wouldn’t win an argument by shouting or making mean or nasty comments, don’t expect your readers to respond well to such tactics. Keep the “voice” of your essay calm and sensible. Your readers will be much more open to what you have to say if they think you are a reasonable person.

Thompson maintains a reasonable tone throughout his essay. He doesn’t attack the grand jury that ruled that Brazill should be tried as an adult or the people who believe that adolescents who commit heinous crimes should be treated like adults. Instead he presents scientific evidence to support the position that “a child is not a man” and emphasizes how enormous the brain changes are with his use of words like “massive,” “wildfire,” and “maelstrom.” He implies that no reasonable person would argue that teenagers do not have “diminished capacity,” but he never accuses his opponents of being unreasonable or scientifically uninformed.

6. **Organize your essay so that it presents your position as effectively as possible.** You want your audience to agree with you by the end of your essay, so you want to organize your essay in such a way that your readers can easily follow it. The number of paragraphs in your essay may vary depending on the nature of your assignment, but the following outline shows the order in which the features of an argument essay are most effective:

**Introduction**
- Background information
- Introduction of subject
- Statement of writer’s opinion

**Body paragraphs**
- Common ground
- Evidence that supports your argument (logical and emotional)
- Opposing points of view
- Response to opposing points of view

**Conclusion**
- Restatement of your position
- Call for action or agreement
The arrangement of evidence in an argument essay depends to a great extent on your readers’ opinions. Most arguments will be organized from general to particular, from particular to general, or from one extreme to another. When you know that your readers already agree with you, arranging your details from general to particular or from most to least important is usually most effective. With this order, you are building on your readers’ agreement and loyalty as you explain your thinking on the subject.

If you suspect that your audience does not agree with you, reverse the organization of your evidence and arrange it from particular to general or from least to most important. In this way, you take your readers step by step through your reasoning in an attempt to get them to agree with you.

Thompson’s essay follows a slightly different pattern but is equally structured in order to convince his readers. Here is an outline of his article:

**Introduction**
- The story of Nathaniel Brazill
- Implied thesis: Brains of teenagers like Brazill are far from adulthood; therefore, teens shouldn’t be treated like adults in the justice system.

**Body paragraphs**
- Recent research on teenage brains
  - Subject introduced: Research shows massive loss of brain tissue during teenage years.
  - Summary of recent research
  - Specific evidence from Thompson’s research at UCLA
- Implications of brain research
  - Evidence: Jurors’ verdict indicates they thought Brazill’s crime was not fully thought-out.
  - Discussion of link between brain changes and accountability
- Response to opposition: Teens should be accountable but not treated as adults.

**Conclusion**
- Brain research doesn’t excuse teenage violence, but it confirms that the juvenile justice system should not treat teens like adults.
Activity 19

Organizing the Essay

The following items are traditional parts of all essays:

- The introduction (usually one or two paragraphs) that “hooks” the reader and provides a thesis statement or road map for the reader
- The body (as many paragraphs as necessary) that supports the thesis statement point by point
- The conclusion (usually only one paragraph) that summarizes the main points and explains the significance of the argument

The number of paragraphs in an essay depends on the nature and complexity of the argument.

Here are some additional hints to help you organize your thoughts:

**Introduction**

- You might include the following in your introductory paragraphs:
  - A “hook” to get the reader’s attention
  - Background information the audience may need
  - A thesis statement, along with some indication of how the essay will be developed (“forecasting”). *Note:* A thesis statement states the topic of the essay and the writer’s position on that topic. You may choose to sharpen or narrow your thesis at this point.

**Body paragraphs**

- Paragraphs that present support for the thesis statement, usually in topic sentences supported with evidence. (Refer to “Getting Ready to Write.”)
- Paragraphs that include different points of view or address counter-arguments
- Paragraphs or sentences where you address those points of view by doing the following:
  - Refuting them
  - Acknowledging them but showing how your argument is better
  - Showing they are irrelevant
- Evidence that you have considered the values, beliefs, and assumptions of your audience; your own values, beliefs, and assumptions; and some common ground that appeals to the various points of view

**Conclusion**

- A final paragraph (or paragraphs) that includes a solid argument to support the thesis and indicates the significance of the argument—the “so what” factor

Draw horizontal lines through your essay to distinguish these three parts, and label them in the margin.
Developing the Content

Read the following highlights about developing your essay, and then discuss them with your classmates.

• Most body paragraphs consist of a topic sentence (or an implied topic sentence) and concrete details to support that topic sentence.
• Body paragraphs give evidence in the form of examples, illustrations, statistics, and so forth. They also analyze the meaning of the evidence.
• Each topic sentence is usually directly related to the thesis statement.
• No set number of paragraphs is required for an essay.
• The thesis dictates and focuses the content of an essay.

Revising the Draft

You now need to review 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 use Part I of the Evaluation Form as a revising checklist for each essay.

Paired Work

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

Individual Work

Revise the draft based on the feedback you have received and the decisions you have made with your partners. Consider the following 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? Which parts are 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 delete? Do I use irrelevant details? Am I repetitive?
6. What should I change? Are parts of my essay confusing or contradictory? Do I need to explain my ideas more fully?
7. What should I rethink? Was my position clear? Did I provide enough analysis to convince my readers?
8. How is my tone? Am I too overbearing or too firm? Do I need qualifiers?
9. Have I addressed differing points of view?
10. Does my conclusion show the significance of my essay?
11. Have I used key vocabulary words correctly to represent ideas from the article? Have I used words that refer to specific facts from the text?
Activity 22

**Editing the Draft**

Edit your drafts based on the information you have received from your instructor or a tutor. Use the editing checklist provided to you. The following editing guidelines will also help you edit your own work.

1. If possible, set your essay aside for 24 hours before rereading it to find errors.
2. If possible, read your essay out loud so that you can hear errors and awkward sentences.
3. Focus on individual words and sentences rather than on 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. Look for only 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 have chosen the right word for the context.

Activity 23

**Reflecting on the Writing**

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 thought with your final draft.

1. What was most difficult about this assignment?
2. What was easiest?
3. What did you learn about debating 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 that need help. Write any questions or concerns you have in the margin.
6. What did you learn from this assignment about your own writing process—about preparing to write, writing the first draft, revising, and editing?