

**The Inclusive Struggle for Critical Reasoning
in the Composition Classroom**



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**Nancy J. Berger
Beacon College
Leesburg, FL 34748
(352) 787-7660**



Obligated Writing

Writing that institutions require and sanction,
whether through pay or grades.

Self-Sponsored Writing

Writing that people do for reasons of expression
or social affiliation, not for direct material
consequence.

Douglas D. Hesse

2005 CCCC Chair's Address

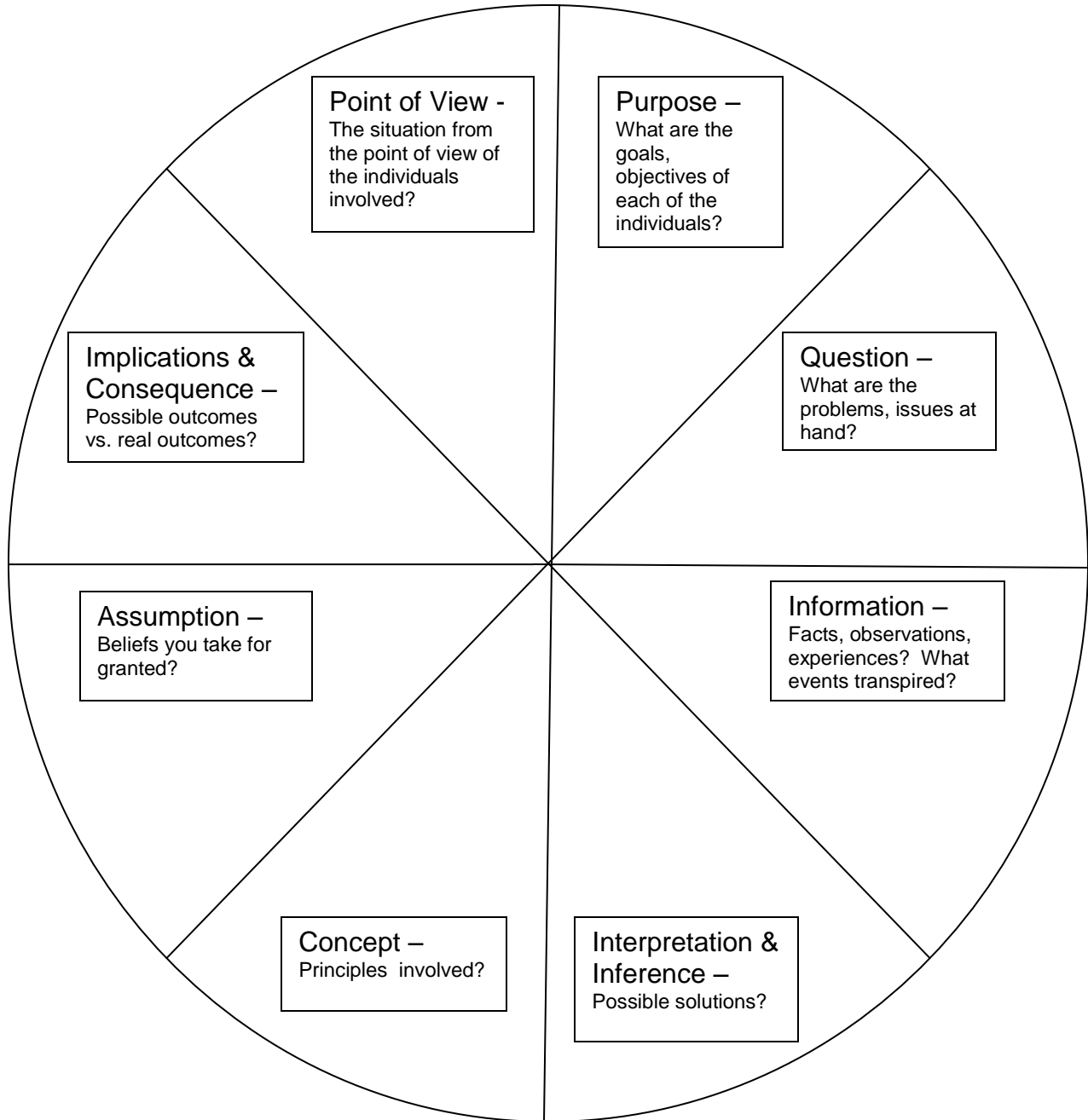


Many students struggle with their “obliged” writing assignments because they do not have a grasp on the critical thinking elements of reasoning. They do not know how to critically reason not only what they write – but why. Although comfortable in their ability to participate in “self-sponsored” writing such as e-mails and text messages, most College Composition students are unaware of the elements shared by both “self-sponsored” and “obliged” college writing. Recognition and knowledge of these elements leads to critically reasoned college writing.

Nancy Berger

Critical Thinking Elements of Reasoning

The Logic of the Situation



The Critical Thinking Elements of:

Purpose:

Assumption:

Information:

Concept:

Interpretation & Inference:

Question:

Point of View:

Implications & Consequence:

The Critical Thinking Elements of College Composition

Purpose:

College-level writing is the level of written discourse at which a successful college student participates. I will learn to write at this level.

Assumption:

College-level writing is a separate entity in - and of - itself, unrelated to any other writing I may do. I will see how this assumption is incorrect.

Information:

In College Composition we will read & analyze models of college writing; recreating them in our own fashion.

Concept:

All writing is a fluid process driven by audience and purpose.

Interpretation & Inference:

I will learn to recognize and distinguish the differences between obliged and self-sponsored college-level writing.

Question:

How can I complete obliged writing tasks as easily as I complete self-sponsored writing?

Point of View:

I will learn to identify the perspective of the reader (the audience) vs. the perspective of the writer.

Implications & Consequence:

I will develop an understanding that wise rhetorical choices will insure my ability to carry out my Purpose.

Nancy Berger



The Drawbridge Exercise ~ Author Unknown

As he left for a visit to his outlying districts, the jealous Baron warned his pretty wife: "Do not leave the castle while I am gone, or I will punish you severely when I return!"

But as the hours passed, the young Baroness grew lonely, and despite her husband's warning, decided to visit her lover who lived in the countryside nearby.

The castle was located on an island in a wide, fast flowing river, with a drawbridge linking the island and the land at the narrowest point in the river.

"Surely my husband will not return before dawn," she thought, and ordered her servants to lower the drawbridge and leave it down until she returned.

After spending several pleasant hours with her lover, the Baroness returned to the drawbridge, only to find it blocked by a madman wildly waving a long, cruel knife. "Do not attempt to cross this bridge, Baroness, or I will kill you," he raved.

Fearing for her life, the Baroness returned to her lover and asked him to help.

"Our relationship is only a romantic one," he said, "I will not help."

The Baroness then sought out a boatman on the river, explained her plight to him and asked him to take her across the river in his boat.

"I will do it, but only if you pay me my fee of five Marks."

"But I have no money with me!" the Baroness protested.

"That is too bad. No money, No ride," the boatman said flatly.

Her fear growing, the Baroness ran crying to the home of a friend, and after again explaining the situation, begged for enough money to pay the boatman his fee.

"If you had not disobeyed your husband, this would not have happened," the friend said. "I will give you no money."

With dawn approaching and her last resource exhausted, the Baroness returned to the bridge in desperation, attempted to cross to the castle, and was slain by the madman.

DIRECTIONS:

In the story above, there are six characters. They are listed below in alphabetical order.

_____ Baron

_____ Friend

_____ Baroness

_____ Lover

_____ Boatman

_____ Madman

Using the list above, rank each character according to how responsible he or she was for the baroness's death. Rank the characters from 1 to 6, with 1 being the most responsible and 6 being the least responsible.

Societal Issues Represented in the Story

Spousal Abuse

Business Ethics

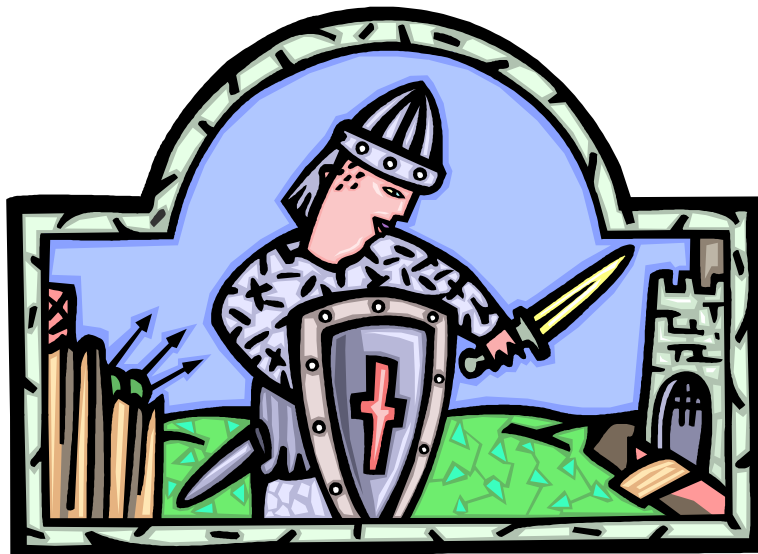
Personal Morals and Values

Marriage and Divorce

Mental Healthcare

Loyalty

Friendship





The Drawbridge Exercise

- 1) As a group, collectively choose the two (2) individuals you feel are the most responsible for the death of the Baroness.**
- 2) With the materials provided, draft a statement of reason justifying why you chose the #1 individual over individual #2.**
- 3) Finally, as a group, who do you think is character #6, the individual least responsible? Draft a statement of reason justifying this choice.**
- 4) Choose a spokesperson to speak for your group and present your poster.**