Overview of the Major Points in Chapter 2

- The five traditional canons of rhetoric—invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery—suggest strategies for creating clear, compelling texts. Such compositions appeal to logos, ethos, and pathos. You can analyze the five canons in a writer’s work or plan to use them in your own.
- The canon of invention comprises strategies—both systematic and intuitive—that writers can use to generate abundant material for texts.
- The canon of arrangement offers techniques that writers can use to give appropriate and effective order and structure to texts.
- The canon of style represents an extensive array of strategies that writers can use to craft their sentences, phrases, and words in ways that are appropriate and effective in the particular writing situation.
- The canon of memory today guides writers to try to tap into the “cultural memory” of their readers effectively.
- The canon of delivery today helps writers decide how to format their compositions, either in print or electronically, in a way that is most effective for readers.

Activities and Discussion Questions for Chapter 2

Use these questions and comments as guides for your own discussion and writing about these works.

Henry David Thoreau, “An Essay on Civil Disobedience” (published 1849)
The text appears on pages 209–225. In a discussion with a group of your classmates, or in a well-developed essay, address one or more of the following questions.
1. State and explain what you see as the central enthymeme in “Civil Disobedience.” Then describe and explain what you see as one of the subsidiary or supporting enthymemes.

2. Point out and explain a way you see Thoreau using the topics as a strategy of invention.

3. Using the six numbered questions on pages 53–54, divide “Civil Disobedience” into functional sections. Then, using the bulleted questions on pages 55–56, analyze the effectiveness of arrangement in one of the functional sections.

4. Select one specific paragraph that you believe represents the most interesting, most vivid passage in “Civil Disobedience.” Describe as much about the style of that passage as you can. For every stylistic feature you notice, explain what you see as its effect on the appeal of “Civil Disobedience” to the development of the central idea, to the credibility of Thoreau, or to the emotional power of the piece.

5. Point out some ways you see Thoreau tapping into the “cultural memory” of his readers. To what does the text refer or allude with the expectation that readers will know the reference or allusion? How do these references and allusions affect the appeal of readers today?

Eavan Boland, “It’s a Woman’s World” (published 1982)

The text appears on pages 226–227. In a discussion with a group of your classmates or in an essay, address one or more of the following questions:

1. Is there a central argument in “It’s a Woman’s World”? If so, what is it? Using the structure of an enthymeme, state and analyze the argument.

2. Does the poem move from general to specific or specific to general, or are specific references and general claims mixed? What is the effect of the arrangement of general claims and specific details in the poem?

3. Paying careful attention to schemes of repetition and balance, analyze what you see as the major stylistic effects of “It’s a Woman’s World.”

4. Describe and analyze the delivery of the poem on the page. How do the line lengths and the stanza divisions influence the effectiveness of the poem?

Alice Walker, “Everyday Use” (published 1973)

The text appears on pages 228–234. In a discussion with a group of your classmates, or in a well-organized essay, address one or more of the following questions:

1. Is there a central argument in “Everyday Use”? If so, what is it? Using the structure of an enthymeme, state and analyze the argument.
2. How does Walker use time as an ordering device in “Everyday Use”? Consider the events mentioned, even in passing, in the story, and arrange them in an exact chronological order. Then contrast the chronological order with the order Walker uses, and explain the effect of Walker’s choice of arrangement.

3. Look carefully at the section of “Everyday Use” where Dee/Wangero shows up at the house with Asalamalakim. Describe how the order of details contributes to the effectiveness of this arrival scene.

4. Describe and analyze the way Walker uses diction to create the character of the narrator of the story, the mother.

5. Do you see “Everyday Use” in any way as a story about cultural memory? If so, explain how. How do these references and allusions affect the appeal of readers today?

The students, in this essay, might begin by speculating on the word our; that is, by looking closely at the diction, they might decide who the poem includes as our. Studying the diction should lead students to a discussion of tone and vivid images.

Prompt #3: Free Response: Argumentation
Suggested Time: 40 minutes

In Walker’s “Everyday Use,” the following conversation takes place between Dee and Mama:

“You just don’t understand,” she said, as Maggie and I came out to the car.

“What don’t I understand?” I wanted to know.

“Your heritage,” she said. And then she turned to Maggie, kissed her, and said, “You ought to try to make something of yourself, too, Maggie. It’s really a new day for us. But from the way you and Mama still live you’d never know it.”

Think carefully about the passage. Then, in a well-written essay, consider the ramifications of “heritage” in your own life. You may use your own knowledge, reading, observation, and experience. This prompt epitomizes the “free-response” essay questions on the AP exam, and it asks students to draw on their personal collection of information.