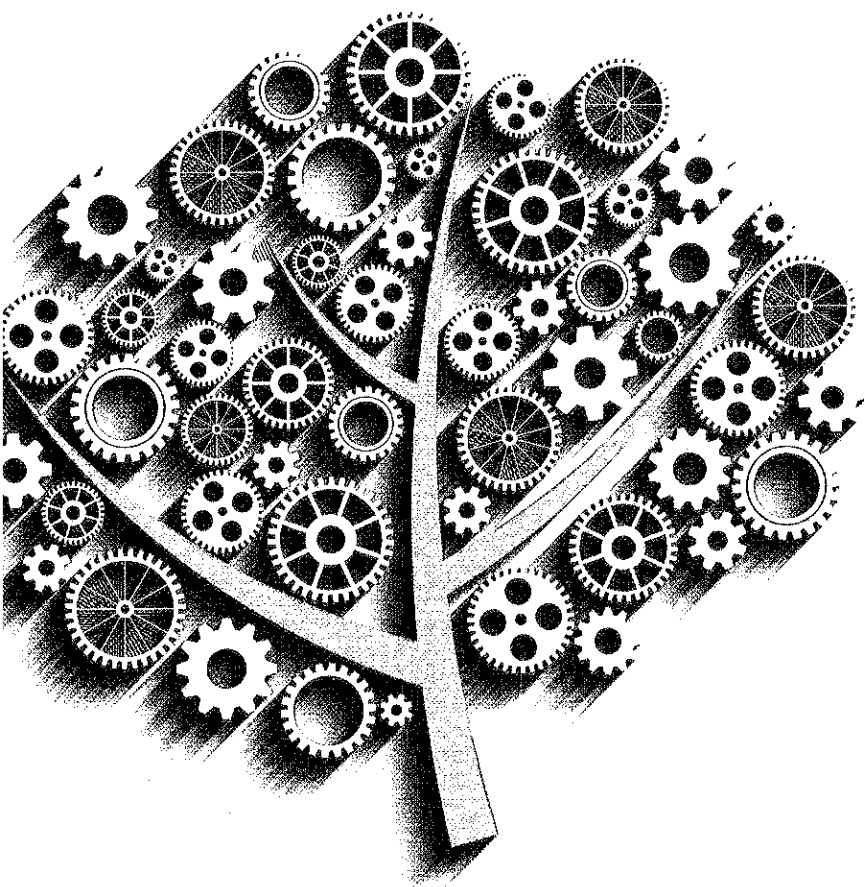


## INSTRUCTOR'S EDITION

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# the real world reader

***A Rhetorical Reader for Writers***

James S. Miller

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olicies in place that allow for entrepreneurs to make their dreams a reality and extend opportunities to others.

A recent report noted, "Without entrepreneurs, there would have been no new net growth in the U.S. for the last 20 years." Policymakers need to continue to strike a balance on government regulation that puts the necessary safe guards on industry, while not choking the ability to innovate, grow and create more job opportunities, promotions, and advancement.

Source: USNews.com, September 9, 2013

<http://www.usnews.com/opinion/blogs/penny-lee/2013/09/04/the-problem-with-striking-workers-and-a-15-minimum-wage>

### Thinking Rhetorically About Argument: Expanded Outline

Now that you've gotten some practice with this kind of analysis, use the expanded outline below to work your way through one of the selections included above. How does this text construct and defend its argument? How does the treatment of argument relate to the other rhetorical choices the writer makes?

#### Step One: Identifying the Issue: What is the Main Topic This Selection Addresses?

What specific topics does this selection explore? What issues does it raise?

What makes this topic arguable? What are the different opinions, that people tend to have about this issue?

Who, in your view, is most likely to care about this issue? How would you characterize the views of the different sides who engage in this debate?

#### Step Two: Defining Purpose: What Goal is the Writer Trying to Accomplish?

What viewpoint on this issue does the author express? What central point about this issue does the writer want to make?

How does the writer want readers to respond to this point?

#### Step Three: Exploring Assumptions: What Assumptions Does the Writer Make About This Issue?

Why does the writer feel this issue is important?

What does the writer assume readers already know about this issue?

What does the writer assume readers do not already know about this issue?

#### Step Four: Defending the Argument: How Does the Writer Justify This Stance?

How does the text go about specifically advancing the writer's point of view? What strategies of persuasion (e.g., logical deduction, statistics/facts, or emotional appeal) does the writer use?

What forms of support does the writer offer? Is this support logical or convincing?

#### Step Five: Revising the Argument: What Critiques or Counterpoints Might I Offer?

Why do I care about this issue? Do I have the same viewpoint on this issue as the writer?

What flaws do I detect in the writer's argument?

What changes would I make to address these flaws?

#### Step Six: Putting It Into Writing

How do I summarize my findings in writing?

### Formal Writing Selections

Our modern culture is rife with countless feuds, struggles, and conflicts. And while it may be easy to create a list of such arguments, much harder to address is the question of how we actually got here. What explains this uptick in public disagreeableness? What aspects of our contemporary culture are to blame? This, in a nutshell, is the question the selections below attempt to address. Offering a representative sampling of the dialogues, diatribes, and debates taking place today, these pieces shine a light on some of the most contentious issues that bedevil and divide us.

To fully understand these issues, this section approaches the essays from two related perspectives. First, it invites you to analyze each essay as its own form of argument. What rhetorical strategies, it asks, does each essay use to convey and support its main point? Second, it invites you to analyze each essay as its own reflection upon argument: an inquiry into how and why we argue in the ways that we do.

#### Myisha Cherry, "Twitter Trolls and the Refusal to Be Silenced"

*When we find ourselves arguing with another person face to face, we can generally rest assured that our conflict won't rise beyond a certain threshold. But what happens to such restraint when our arguments go online? Under the Web's protective cloak of anonymity, many speak to*

others in ways that mislead, mock, and malign. Taking aim at one of the key examples of this trend, Myisha Cherry, an adjunct professor of philosophy at the City University of New York, shares her thoughts about the growing threat of "Twitter trolling."

*"Twitter has been a space to share information but it has also been a space where civility can be thrown out the window, free speech is hailed and abused and where the silencing of individuals, particularly women and minorities, has become commonplace."*

On August 4, 2013, some Twitter users boycotted the service in what was known as the #TwitterSilence Campaign. The boycott was in response to rape and bomb threats directed at feminist users. Such threats included, "a bomb has been placed outside your home," sent to historian Mary Beard. Caroline Criado-Perez, a campaigner who was successful with getting Jane Austen on the British bank note, received tweets like "kill yourself before I do." They've also received rape threats, which because of their explicit nature, I refuse to repeat here.

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In 140 characters or less, trolls use Twitter like the Westboro Baptist Church uses funeral picket lines: to hail insults against others. Actor Jamie Fox was called a "stupid Ni\*\*a" on Twitter for wearing a Trayvon Martin Shirt at an award show. Latino American Singer Mark Anthony was called a "sp\*c" on Twitter after singing God Bless America at the 2013 MLB All-Star Game. A female Asheville, North Carolina, legislator recently was targeted by a fake GOP Tweeter account calling her "an argument for eugenics." In addition, everyday people who use Twitter to express their concerns about political oppression and social ills are also targets of these threats and insults.

Twitter UK has responded by making the report abuse process easier by allowing users to report abuses through a one-click process. Twitter has been quoted as saying that they want people to feel safe and that they do not tolerate abuse. For some, this is an important step in the service fulfilling its ethical obligation.

But what is the moral and political obligation of those who receive these threats? Should they take them seriously and retreat, or should they remain defiant? These are the questions that came up in response to this past weekend's #TwitterSilence Campaign.

Some believed that the political and moral thing to do was to boycott the service. Author Caitlin Moran wrote on her blog:

*I'm pro the mooted 24-hour walk-out on 4th of August, because not only is it a symbolic act of solidarity . . . but because it will also focus minds at Twitter to come up with their own solution to the abuses of their private company. You know—the*

popularity of social networking sites waxes and wanes with ferocious rapidity. Twitter might currently be the hot thing—but it only takes a couple of bad months for it to become the new Friends Reunited, the new MySpace, the new Bebo.

For Moran, the boycott would be an act of solidarity for those who have been abused on Twitter, a way to challenge Twitter to change its policies and for Twitter to see the value of its large percentage of users: women.

However, others saw it another way. British Journalist Damian Thompson called it an "attention-seeking stunt" and went on to suggest, "What's happened instead is that the temporary disappearance of a certain breed of feminist and right-on blokes has reduced the volume of preachy, shouty messages on Twitter."

Historian Mary Beard, who has received death threats, joined the boycott. However, Caroline Criado-Perez felt a different moral and political obligation. Although she respected others' decision to boycott, she refused to participate. Her reason was because she refused to be silenced.

### The Counter-Revolution of Silencing

When we think of the actions of trolls, the main objective of their Internet harassment is not merely to annoy, but to silence users. Silencing is a technique used to shut people up from talking about and taking a stand against oppression. As blogger Kinsey Hope argues, it can include trolling, offensive jokes, slurs, threats and dismissal of emotions. For Hope, the purpose is to disable and dismiss voices.

As a writer who uses social media, I too have been the victim of trolls. I know how with each read of insulting comments, I am tempted to be silent. However, I realize that is their aim and giving in will be doing exactly what the trolls want me to do: remain silent. So, it's the act of continuing to speak, in spite of the insulting and threatening reactions, that makes my speech act more revolutionary.

Silencing is nothing new. People have tried to silence multiple voices throughout history. For example, Martin Luther King, Jr., received constant death threats in addition to threats of public exposure of his personal sexual acts if he did not kill himself. The act of dismissing women's anger as hysteria has long been a form of silencing. Feminists have been silenced by being long regarded as "man-haters." The overall purpose of these techniques is to cause the individual to shut up. And with the Internet, silencing has gotten quick, direct, loud, ingenious, bolder and more anonymous.

### Standing Up to Trolls

However, I believe boycotting in ways that keep our voices silent is counterproductive. I believe continuing to speak despite the hate one may receive via the Internet does several things.

Firstly, the refusal to retreat from Twitter for 24 hours, delete one's account all together or to stop speaking out about injustice online is saying that one refuses to be silenced by the insults of others. It's a powerful stance against intimidation. It's to be defiant despite others' willingness to keep you quiet.

Secondly, refusing to be silenced is an acknowledgement that safety should be taken seriously, but it does not neglect the fact that one's truth *should* be told and injustice must be fought at all cost. As poet and activist Audre Lorde suggests, "your silence will not protect you." The alternative of sitting in "safe corners mute as bottles" would still make us afraid. She notes, "We have been socialized to respect fear more than our own need for language and definition." Although social media threats can make us afraid and insults can make us offended, being silenced will not make things better. Oppression will still exist. Now more than ever is the time to reclaim our need for language, particularly anti-oppressive language that can be shared across the world with the click of a button.

Thirdly, the refusal to be silenced also shows that one's words against oppression are more powerful than the words of trolls. If the online weapons of trolls are to be rendered powerless, we must allow our words to do the talking, the challenging, the revealing and the changing. We must do this instead of allowing insults and harassment to have the power to make our powerful voices mute. The horrific truths of oppression and injustice must be expressed. If not by us, then by who?

Each time I get online to share information and to join the fight against injustice, I remind myself of the old civil rights hymn that is as powerful now as it was in the 1960's:

Don't you let nobody turn you 'round/Turn you 'round/turn you 'round/Well don't  
you let nobody turn you 'round/You got to keep on walkin', keep on talkin'

Our words have power. It is up to us who we allow to have the last word. Trolls or Truth? For me, I choose the latter.

Source: The Huffington Post, August 6, 2013  
[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/myisha-cherry/trolls-and-the-refusal-to-be-silenced\\_b\\_3708466.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/myisha-cherry/trolls-and-the-refusal-to-be-silenced_b_3708466.html)

**Discussion/Writing Prompts**

1. Cherry's thesis rests upon the assumption that online comments have the power to "silence" our own voices. Is it possible to analyze Cherry's essay along these same lines? In what ways does this essay seem to invite or encourage other voices to weigh in on this topic? Where in the essay do you see evidence of this? [Rhetorical Analysis of Argument]
2. According to Cherry, verbal abuse is a hallmark of online communication. Does this claim resonate with your own experience? Can you think of a moment online where you found yourself face to face (so to speak) with an abusive or threatening comment? If so, what was your response? [Personal Reflection]
3. Take a moment to consider the title of this essay. How accurate does the phrase "Twitter Trolls" seem to you? What image or association does it evoke? And what larger point about online conflict do you think Cherry is trying to make by using it? [Close Reading]

4. In making her argument about online harassment, Cherry uses stories from her own life as part of her support. How persuasive do you find this rhetorical strategy to be? What aspect of her larger argument does Cherry's decision to employ this narrative mode help her advance? [Analyzing Rhetorical Modes]
5. This essay offers several reasons why those opposed to online harassment should not remain silent: It's "a powerful stance against intimidation"; it's "an acknowledgement that safety should be taken seriously"; and it "shows that one's words against oppression are more powerful than the words of trolls." Choose one of the factors listed here. Then, write an essay in which you argue either for or against its validity in helping to combat "Twitter Trolls." [Argument]
6. How does Cherry's argument about "Twitter Trolls" compare to Lisa Bonos' discussion of in "The Art of the Digital Breakup"? What similarities do you see between these two forms of online conflict? Do you think Bonos would consider the stories cited in Cherry's piece to be useful in presenting her own thesis? Why, or why not? [Compare and Contrast]
7. There is an ample body of social and scientific research into the causes behind anger, rage, and conflict online. Conduct some research of your own into some of the ways these questions have been studied. What kinds of research are out there? What types of researchers take up these questions? And what are their findings? [Research]

**Lisa Bonos, "The Art of the Digital Breakup"**

*We have long been accustomed to thinking about relationships—particularly the breakup of a relationship—as a highly personal matter. With the rise of social networking sites, however, this long-held assumption is being turned on its head. Nowadays, argues Lisa Bonos, it is becoming just as common for a divorce to be broadcast online as it is for it to be shared between close relatives or friends. What, she asks, are the effects of such a momentous and sudden change? And are we fully prepared to deal with all of its consequences?*

*"[F]rom what I've seen in my own dating life and what I've heard in conversations with other singles and relationship experts, technology has made our breakups even worse."*

So I went through a bad breakup recently.

It wasn't tough because of the feelings I had for the guy. Rather it was because of the way things ended. After 10 days of silence from him, during which I calmly texted, called and e-mailed, he e-mailed me to say he was overwhelmed with work and couldn't handle a relationship. No call, no conversation. Two months of dating—we'd met each other's friends and were seeing each other every weekend—dissolved in one impersonal paragraph.