INTRODUCTION TO PART II: THE SCENARIOS
In part II of Scenarios for Writing, we provide a structure within which you and your classmates are asked to grapple with simulated real-life issues and problems. As you develop and present your views on how best to address these problems, you’ll engage in a variety of activities that are intended to help you better understand and improve your writing process. We call our presentations of these simulated real-life issues and problems scenarios.

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What are Scenarios?

What characteristics do these scenarios—really, brief stories—share? All have three main elements:

• **Change, recent or impending:** Each scenario in this text involves a modification of the status quo. Without change, there are no new problems to solve.

• **Multiple constituencies:** The change that forms the basis for a scenario must affect more than two interested and involved parties, each with its own perspective on the issues. (A dispute between a pair of neighbors, for example, wouldn’t become a scenario.) The change might affect some constituencies in a positive way and others negatively.

• **A public or civic focus:** Public problems call for open discussion (and perhaps debate) among the interested groups. This give-and-take may take place in writing (in the press, for example) or orally, at open meetings.

• Each scenario in the chapters that follow outlines a problem—a change involving multiple, public constituencies—that becomes apparent as you read the story: Perhaps guns and other weapons begin to appear at a local high school, and students, parents, and administrators must decide how to respond. Perhaps a proposed land development might severely alter the lifestyles of the people who live in a small, rural community. Perhaps there is a move to limit Internet access at the local library, where just about anyone can access and download what some term “pornography.” Because many of the issues in the scenarios are public in nature, part II in a way represents a return to the origins of rhetoric, when citizens (unfortunately, only males in those days) discussed and debated public and civic problems and issues.

We don’t provide solutions for the questions these scenarios raise. Rather, we ask you to develop your own. Proposed solutions are never “right” or “wrong”; there is no single solution for the issues these scenarios present. Instead, any proposal will have multiple positive and negative aspects. All our classes develop distinct and different ideas for how best to solve the problems and issues we ask them to confront.
Why Use Scenarios?

In part II: The Scenarios, stories anchor each chapter, forming the impetus for writing assignments and other activities. We've used this approach for a number of reasons:

• Stories catch our interest more quickly than does instructional text. Because of that, we believe you’ll find the scenarios interesting and enjoyable to read.

• The narrative format enables you and your classmates to understand the issues quickly, and because we ask you to become actively involved in each scenario, to easily take on the role of one of the interested parties. By assuming the role of someone affected by the scenario, you become involved in working (in collaboration with your classmates) to solve the problems and issues the scenario presents. You and several of your classmates will decide together how the scenario affects you, including your reasons for having the concerns you do; the ideas you have for solving the problem presented; and the effect(s) your proposed solution might have on your group, as well as on the other affected by the situation.

• You should find it easy to sympathize and empathize with the (fictitious) people in each story because each scenario addresses public, civic, or ethical issues and problems of the kind you and your families may one day face.

• You’ll learn that gathering information, discussing research, and working as a member of a small group of classmates enhances the work you do on your own. As a group you can gather more information than any of you would if you worked alone. Collaboration also helps you to better understand your research, because you share and discuss what you find with your classmates. And because group activities are designed so that each member is responsible for some part of the group assignment, no one member has to carry the rest of his or her group by doing the lion’s share of the work.

• The scenario approach involves you in knowledge making—not just in knowledge finding and knowledge presenting. By working with your classmates to determine the best solution or solutions to a given set of issues and problems, you construct a new way of addressing the developments outlined in each scenario. This is knowledge creation. (You also discover information in your research, and you may present your situation in writing and orally if your instructor asks you to do so.)

• Each scenario asks you to work collectively toward a consensus on the best solution(s) to a particular problem at a particular moment in time for a specific group of people. This approach simulates the way in which social and other problems are addressed in life. If you had a personal problem, you might work with family members to solve it; if you had a business problem, you’d collaborate with your coworkers; if there were a problem in your neighborhood, you might get together with your neighbors to decide what to do; if your city or town faced a difficulty of some sort, you’d work with the other residents of your community to solve it.

In addition to working with your classmates to discover possible solutions to the problems you’ll explore, you’ll also have the opportunity to express your own position. At the end of each scenario, you’ll construct an individual writing assignment. You work toward the construction of this assignment as you participate in the group activities addressing the scenario: as you discuss and determine what your group believes, as you conduct research and share information, and as you compose a collaborative group
statement and perhaps share an open discussion with everyone in your class. By the time your instructor asks you to compose your individual writing, you’ll be well prepared to do so.
Working with the Scenarios

As you begin reading through a scenario, think about how the elements of the rhetorical situation—occasion, purpose, topic, audience, and writer—interact. Paying close attention to the circumstances in the scenarios will make your writing decisions easier. The information you learned in part I of this text should inform your interaction with each scenario. You’ll draw on your understanding of what a rhetorical situation is, ways to conduct research and critically read the sources you find, your writing process, and how to evaluate and use your research in your text to support your position.

Each scenario provides an authentic occasion for writing: problems and issues that might affect you and your classmates. For the first few activities in each scenario, your instructor will ask you to work with several of your classmates as a member of one of the groups involved with the scenario, consider all aspects of the problem or issue your group faces.

The Collaborative Statement

Working through the various stages of the writing process, your group then composes a collaborative statement outlining what it thinks about the problems facing it in the scenario. Your group addresses its statement to the individual or group it believes has the ability to resolve the problem. To prepare the collaborative statement, you and the other members of your group:

1. Read about and discuss the issues presented in the scenario.
2. Work with invention activities (including brainstorming, freewriting, and clustering) to help you understand the problems and issues.
3. Compose a first draft of a collaborative statement.
4. Work to revise that draft so that it clearly articulates your message.
5. Share your draft with other groups, so all can make suggestions.
6. Read additional sources on the issue, and complete more invention activities to further clarify your ideas.
7. Revise your draft until you’re satisfied that it’s ready for editing and publishing.

For this collaborative writing, you have a specific purpose: to inform your audience of your group's thinking about the scenario, or to propose a solution to some of the problems you face, or to persuade your audience to help modify the situation, or to explain what others have done in similar circumstances. You draw on your knowledge of rhetorical strategies and appeals to compose a statement that delivers your message to a particular audience, for a specific purpose. As you work to capture your ideas on paper, you should begin to clarify what you really think, as well as ways in which you feel the problem represented in a scenario should be solved. In other words, you clarify your ideas about the issue through the process of writing about them.

Research and the Readings

To offer context and background information for each scenario, we provide a range of readings related to the subject of each scenario; we’ve also followed each reading with questions about the text. These questions will help you and your classmates understand the readings and think about how they relate to other texts you’ve read and
discussed. We've selected readings that provide the same type of information you'd look for if you really were involved in the scenario; they are taken from a range of sources, including newspapers, magazines, journals, books, and the Internet. You evaluate and use the information and data in these readings to support your group's position and to construct your individual writing projects. Your instructor may ask you to read all or only some of the readings.

As you work with the readings, you'll use the research tools you've already learned, including summarizing, paraphrasing, and annotating. You'll evaluate the readings for credibility. If you keep a writer's journal, you might record the details of what you read, the ways in which ideas connect and support one another, the questions that arise, and any visual aids your research uncovers (such as graphs, drawings, and photographs). The information you record in your journal can serve as research for your compositions, as you integrate what you learn from those readings into your writing, to support your thesis.

The Open Meeting

Your instructor might ask you and your classmates to follow your collaborative written statement with an "open meeting" in which each group presents its ideas orally and, perhaps, questions members of the other groups. These open discussions can help you further clarify your thinking and better understand the problems and issues the scenario portrays.

Individual Writing

When you've completed your collaborative work, you next construct an individual writing assignment; your instructor will select the assignment you are to focus on from the options offered for each scenario. This is your opportunity to use all of what you've learned to this point in the scenario: you can draw on your readings, discussions, collaborative writing (and perhaps a whole-class open meeting), and journal writing to compose your individual paper. At the end of each scenario, there are suggestions for further writing and research.

Because much of what you do as you work through a scenario depends on collaborating effectively with your classmates, let's discuss how you can best do that.
Working Together Effectively

The first step toward group or collaborative work is to discuss and share. When you collaborate or work together in class, you share some of your ideas and writing with your classmates. Later, you might have the opportunity to present your ideas to the entire class.

Listening, Speaking, Collaborating

Listening, speaking, and collaborating in a classroom setting might seem simple enough. But think critically about each of these terms, and consider how the rhetorical situation influences how we define them:

- **Listening**: What does it mean to really listen? Is simply hearing the words enough, or does listening mean making an effort to understand what the speaker is saying? Do you listen in different ways to different people? Why? In what ways? How can you indicate to the speaker that you fully understand what he or she is saying? What activities (such as taking notes) might help you become a better listener?

- **Speaking**: What does it mean to fully and clearly explain something to another person? How can you know if your listener understands what you’re saying? Is speaking the same as writing, but in oral form? How do you translate ideas expressed on paper into something a listener can grasp? How do you clearly put into words the ideas in your mind?

- **Collaborating**: The word *collaborate* means to work together, but what activities does that include? Does collaboration imply an equality among those involved? Does it mean that each must do his or her share of the work? How do you know whether someone is carrying his or her full load? What steps can you take to ensure that a small group functions as it should?

Cooperative learning: working together

Here's an example of how these activities—listening, speaking, and collaborating—interact with one another. Much of the initial work you'll do for each scenario requires that you work in small groups, each representing an interested party—someone who has a stake in the issues involved.

If you've been involved in such group activities in the past, you might have found your experiences productive and helpful. Perhaps you found group work both useful and informative, especially when collaboration generated more information than each group member might have found alone. Did you notice, however, that sometimes not everyone in a group did an equal amount of the work?

The group work in which you'll participate as you engage the scenarios might not be the same as what you’ve undertaken in the past. Our approach is modeled on "cooperative learning." When we ask you and your classmates to perform a cooperative activity, we mean that you collaborate to work together toward a common goal. Each member of the group has a specific role to play and activities for which he or she is responsible.

Suppose that your group is asked to collect information on an issue that your class is investigating: one member might locate relevant information in the college library,
another student might collect information from the Internet, and still another might interview several people. Then each of you shares with the others the information you’ve collected. Each group member must be actively involved if you are to complete your assigned task.

You contribute to your group in several ways. You conduct research, and you report the results of that research to the group. Whenever you are asked to participate in a group activity, each of you is assigned a specific role:

- **Task Manager:** The task manager keeps the group focused and ensures that it is ready to report its findings when called on to do so.
- **Recorder:** The recorder writes down decisions made by the group.
- **Speaker:** The job of the speaker is to report the group's findings to the entire class. Often, the recorder creates a written document containing the group's main points; the speaker then elaborates on and explains those main points to the rest of the class.
- **Questioner:** The questioner, or devil's advocate, deliberately questions what the group is doing and the decisions the group makes, to help ensure that it stays on the right track.

At times, your instructor may combine some of these roles (especially in smaller groups). In other situations, your teacher may assign more than one student to each role, especially if you're working on a more complex activity.

For some scenarios, you might be asked to assume a role that’s antithetical to your feelings about the issue or problem. If this happens, it’s important to realize that you can learn a lot by being part of a group with which you don't completely agree. To study an issue from a new or different perspective or to promote a solution with which you don't fully agree often helps you to truly understand your own thinking. When you adopt a position that appears to be opposed to what you believe, you can stretch your thinking—you can grow and change.

**Composing a group statement**

As part of the group work, each group is asked to outline its views about the issues and problems each scenario presents in a brief statement. These statements—usually only two pages in length—can take a variety of forms, including a letter to the editor, a guest editorial for the local newspaper, or a statement to the government agency that might solve the problem. Constructing these collaborative statements helps you clarify your ideas.

One effective approach to constructing a group statement is for each group member to compose his or her own statement, listing the most important issues and problems. Then, working collectively, group members draw on the individual comments to construct a group statement.

Another effective approach for putting together a group statement is to take notes each group member has made (from readings and discussions), designate one group member to record the group’s ideas, and then collaboratively compose an initial draft of what your group thinks. This might seem somewhat hectic the first time you try it, with several group members offering suggestions on what to write and how to write it, but if
you give the process some time, you'll find that working together is an interesting and useful way to get your collective ideas onto paper.

Once you have a first draft of your collaborative statement, each group member should read through it, marking any sections that are unclear. Work together to clarify those parts. Next, each group member should read the statement once more, this time looking for places in the text where an argument might require more evidence. Then, again working together, decide which of the pieces of evidence gathered during your research (facts, data, testimony, statistics) might provide additional support for the points you’re trying to make. The idea is to read through and carefully revise your draft several times, to ensure that your group's ideas are expressed as clearly as possible.

Your instructor may ask you to read and comment on each others' papers (your group statements or your individual assignments). Working together in that way gives you the chance to help your classmates become better writers: by acting as a real reader and indicating where in the text you need more information, where you find the writing confusing, or where additional elaboration might be useful, you can help your classmates improve their compositions.

**Speaking at an Open Meeting**

Once each group has constructed and revised its written statement, your instructor may ask you to participate in an open meeting in which group members present their ideas to the entire class. In such a meeting, instructors might allow groups to question one another. This kind of oral give-and-take helps you continue to clarify your ideas; it also helps you learn to answer objections to your group's position.

If your instructor asks your group to participate in an open meeting, your group must adapt its written statement for oral presentation. Speaking to a group is not the same as reading a written statement aloud. An oral argument differs from a written presentation in two ways: you must anticipate questions from your audience, and you must make all connections explicit.

When you speak to a large group, your listeners can ask questions about what you’ve said. It's important to anticipate the questions that your audience might ask (some of these may be difficult for you to answer) so that you are prepared with appropriate responses.

In an open meeting, you scrutinize the presentations of others and they pay close attention to your presentation. They might have questions about statements you make, or they might disagree with an assertion you make. Prepare yourself by trying to anticipate your audience’s reaction:

- What questions do you think they might have?
- What in your statement might be confusing?
- How might you make your points more clearly?
- Are you providing enough support for your proposed solution?

As you listen to the other speakers, take notes. Keep track of any questions you have or any points you’d like to challenge later. How do the other groups’ positions affect yours? Where do you agree and disagree? You might think that you’ll remember your questions, but it’s always best to take careful written notes.
When ideas are presented in writing, the reader can review earlier passages to clarify what the writer said, but in a spoken presentation, the listener does not have this same opportunity. Therefore, the speaker must make each connection explicit, so that listeners can readily follow along and understand what is being said. In an open meeting, your group’s presenter must be organized and logical, just as your written group statement is organized and logical.

Give your spokesperson an opportunity to practice in front of the group so that group members can offer advice and ask questions. You might ask one or more members to play the role of devil’s advocate, taking an opposing view for the purpose of identifying possible flaws in your speaker’s position. You should be critical but supportive; in this way you can identify flaws in the presentation while the speaker practices his or her delivery.
Looking for Scenarios in Your Own Life

Now that you understand the concept behind the scenario approach—a simulation of active participation in solving real-life problems and issues—keep your eyes open for possible scenario-like situations in your personal or academic life, in your community, or at work. Then, apply what you’re learning as you work through the scenarios to solving real problems, to finding the best solutions for the real issues.

Think about the places in your life where you might find scenario-like situations:

• **Professional/work life:** One of our scenarios focuses on a library in a small town—and whether its computers should be monitored or censored in some manner. The librarians and others who work at the library have a stake in the issue, as do the library’s patrons—including students and children who both need access to information.

  In your own work environment, there might be potential conflicts that require groups to work together to search for an acceptable resolution. For example, you might face a change in your working conditions, in which you (and your fellow workers) must interact with the owners of the firm, perhaps a labor union, government agencies, and others. Or you might encounter some other sort of change in the workplace (a different manufacturing arrangement, new cubicles for office staff, or a change in insurance options), that would require various groups to work together to find and implement the best solution.

• **Community life:** One scenario in this text asks if it is acceptable for a community to resell the firearms it confiscates, if it uses the funds it collects for worthwhile purposes. Does your community do this? Should it?

  Life in your town is constantly in flux: construction of new roads or freeways, modifications in community services, perhaps a proposed new power plant nearby, changes in methods for the disposal of hazardous waste, a proposal to alter how your local government functions, or plans to construct a huge "superstore" down the street from where you live.

• **Academic life:** In this text, one scenario focuses on a move to distance learning at a college. Do online classes (or does pursuing an online degree) provide the same educational benefits as the traditional model? What should a college education consist of? Is a degree from an online college "worth" as much as a degree from a traditional institution? Why or why not?

  What changes are there in your personal educational world? Have changes recently been made at or are they proposed for your campus community? Is there a proposal to build a new dorm? Have new restrictions on bicycles on campus been posted? Are there policy changes at the campus day care center? The health center? Are there recycling issues? Safety concerns? Student protests of some kind? A change in the way the administration enforces some of its rules? A proposal to eliminate an important or popular degree program?

• **Personal life:** One of our scenarios centers on a changing situation at a local high school, where weapons begin to appear. Have there recently been changes at your siblings’, cousins’, or children's schools? Another of the scenarios centers on quality-of-life issues, as well as property rights. What is occurring in your neighborhood?
Are your general living conditions deteriorating in some way? What about your quality of life?

Appendix B offers another approach for extending the skills you’ll develop as you work with the scenarios in part II. The concept of service learning benefits your community as it helps you expand and enhance your thinking and writing abilities.
Getting started

Now it's time to become involved: to read, discuss, research, and work to solve the problems the scenarios in chapter 4-9 present. One bit of advice: pretend that you really do belong to the group you're assigned to and participate actively. You'll find that you learn a lot while your writing improves.