

## PREFACE

The following piece is a stand-alone section of an instructions manual that I wrote for the UCSB Writing Program's Technical Writing course. Although I worked on the full project with another writer, I planned and wrote this particular section on my own. For our project, we chose to write a literary manual whose primary purpose was to help struggling English students or students taking English literature courses through the process of writing an effective literary analysis paper. The section I've included below details my personal process for identifying refutation of an argument in order to write a strong thesis.

I felt that this piece was important to include in my portfolio because it showcases a different style of writing to that of my personal and literary work, and is also a style in which I did not have any previous experience upon entering the class. Through this piece, I was able to exercise my writing skills in a structured, precise, and to-the-point manner and learn about how to adjust and adapt my written voice to fit the assignment's technical nature.

### Identifying Refutation (excerpted)

#### Purpose

The most important component of that thesis is its argument, and that argument can succeed only if it can be refuted. The process of identifying refutation will be described below. These instructions assume that the writer understands basic sentence structure and has already created an argument.

#### Before You Begin

1. Make sure to have a copy of your chosen text/passage open. A paper copy is recommended for annotation, but an online copy will serve just as well.
2. Make sure to have a copy of your argument available.
  - Have quotations that you used to form this argument available as well.
3. Make sure to have a copy of the question/prompt readily available.

#### Samples Used in Instruction

For these instructions, **Figure 1** is the text, **Figure 2** is the prompt/question, and **Figure 3** is the argument.

**Figure 1 (excerpted from page 49-50 of *Heart of Darkness*, by Joseph Conrad)**

Going up the river was like travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world, when vegetation rioted on the earth and the big trees were kings. An empty stream, a great silence, an impenetrable forest. The air was warm, thick, heavy, sluggish. There was no joy in the brilliance of sunshine. The long stretches of the waterway ran on, deserted, into the gloom of overshadowed distances. On the silvery sand-banks, hippos and alligators sunned themselves side by side. The broadening waters flowed through a mob of wooded islands; you lost your way on that river as you would in a desert, and butted all day long against shoals, trying to find the channel, till you thought yourself bewitched and cut off for ever from everything you had known once—somewhere—far away—in another existence perhaps.

### Figure 2: Prompt Question

**Question:** What atmosphere does Conrad evoke of the Congo River?

**Answer:** He evokes an isolating atmosphere.

### Figure 3: Argument

Conrad evokes an isolating and monstrous atmosphere of the Congo River.

### Instructions

1. Reread your argument and remove the part of it that is an opinion. If you have done this correctly, you will be left with a sentence that cannot be argued.

#### Example 1 (in reference to Figure 3)

**Original Argument:** Conrad evokes an **isolating and monstrous** atmosphere of the Congo River.

**Not an Argument:** Conrad evokes an atmosphere of the Congo River.

Since the Congo River is a place, it obviously evokes an atmosphere. Therefore, **isolating and monstrous** is the opinion in your argument.

2. Reread the quotations you used to create your argument and interpret them in a different way.
  - Make sure to still answer your question!

#### Example 2 (in reference to Figure 1 and Figure 2)

“There was no joy in the brilliance of sunshine.”  
“you lost your way on that river as you would in a desert”

**Question:** What atmosphere does Conrad evoke of the Congo River?

**Original Interpretation:** The irony in these contrasting images makes the atmosphere of the Congo River seem monstrous and isolating.

**New Interpretation:** These contrasting images make the atmosphere of the Congo River seem uncertain since it changes all that it touches.

3. Make sure your new interpretation is not simply repeating your original interpretation.

#### **Example 4**

**Original Interpretation:** The irony in these contrasting images makes the atmosphere of the Congo River seem monstrous and isolating.

**Repetitive Interpretation:** These contrasting images make the atmosphere of the Congo River seem lonely (synonym of isolating) and alien (similar to monstrous).

4. Repeat **Step 1** with your new interpretation. If your new interpretation passes **Step 1**, you have proved that your original argument can be refuted.