Instructions: One of the top popular songs of 1983 was the Police's "Every Breath You Take," a song whose chorus ran "Every breath you take/Every move you make/Every step you take/I'll be watching you." While many listeners perceived this song as a tender love ballad, its writer, Sting, later derided it as a menacing tribute to "surveillance and ownership and jealousy."

The multiple meanings of "Every Breath You Take" undoubtedly contributed to its popularity, but they raise a vexing issue: which interpretation is "correct"? Contrary to what you might think, Sting's interpretation is not "right" simply because he wrote the song; songs' meanings, as long as they are textually supportable, are created as much by listeners as by authors.

Your task in this assignment will be to choose a similar song - something evocative, something with many possible meanings - and construct an analysis of the song that you can support with evidence from the song's lyrics. You'll follow the steps below and will hand in all invention work with your formal paper. There will be class time for workshopping and discussing issues raised by the assignment.

Step 1: Choose a song and type out its lyrics.

Choose a favorite song with interesting lyrics. Choose carefully. Select a song that has
• Interesting music attached to it that you like. Make sure you're able to explain what kind of music (jazz, hip-hop, rock, heavy metal, etc.) is used.
• A varied vocabulary.
• Only minimal repetition of key words and phrases (songs that are mostly choruses don't work well).
• Unusual subject-matter, or at least a fresh angle on a familiar subject

Avoid songs filled with clichés, songs that are very hard to understand, and songs that don't make sense to you even after you've listened to all the words. If you're having trouble finding a song that works for you, refer to the list at the end of this assignment sheet for suggestions.

On a separate sheet of paper, type out the lyrics of this song, preferably from a liner sheet. (Listening to the music to try to hear the lyrics is OK, but not always reliable.) Single-space the lyrics; you'll be attaching them to your paper.

Step 2: begin inventing by paraphrasing the song twice. On separate sheets of paper:

• Write out, in your own words, a paraphrase - a version in your own words of what you the lyric says. Don't try to get the deeper meanings of the lyric - just try to literally summarize what it's saying.

• Then write out a second paraphrase of the song, this time either taking a different point of view, exploiting double meanings in the words, or seeing the song from a different perspective. Look for puns, words that mean more than one thing, and sentences that change meaning when the words are emphasized in another way.

• Review your song lyrics and your two paraphrases. Which paraphrase works better, and why? Settle on the paraphrase you want to work with.

When you're finished with Step 2, you should have two complete paraphrases of the lyric - both of
them substantially different. Good songs can be interpreted in more than one way. If your song seems hopelessly mired in a single meaning, try a different one. Likewise, if your original paraphrases seem skimpy (too short!) or inaccurate, rework or expand them. Use inventing techniques to get more ideas.

**Step 3: Create the first draft, using your invention materials.**

- Begin drafting. Use the "Getting Started" exercise to help begin, if necessary. Take your favorite paraphrase as your interpretation, but keep in mind the possibilities - the counterarguments - suggested by your second paraphrase. Other factors you might consider, depending on the song you've chosen and your interpretive focus:
  - the song's history and its place in history
  - the relationship between the lyrics and the music
  - the viewpoint of the song's narrator and/or writer (not the same person!)
  - if the song has multiple meanings, the significance of the fact that they coexist in the same song, allowing hearers to "hear" the song differently.

**Step 4: Revise and polish your draft.**

- Revise and polish your paper, using the feedback you've received in groups. With your final paper, you must hand in:
  - All invention maps, including the typed lyric sheet and the two paraphrases
  - Your draft, including the "Getting Started" sheet if used.
  - All feedback sheets, where applicable.
  - A revised, proofread, and fully documented paper. We will discuss documenting a song in class. Instructions for documenting a popular song are included in the body of "Sample MLA Paper" in *Writing Both Sides*.

**Some songs that have worked for previous students:**

Billy Joel, “The Piano Man”; “The Stranger”
Bob Dylan, “You’re Gonna Leave Me Lonesome When You Go”; “Highway 61”
The Beatles, songs written after about 1966 (avoid the very early ones)
The Beach Boys, “In My Room” “Surfer Girl,”
Don Henley, “The Boys of Summer”; also, various songs by the Eagles
Elvis Presley, “Hound Dog” and “Jailhouse Rock”
The Ramones, “I Wanna Be Sedated”
Nirvana, “Smells Like Teen Spirit”
Neil Young, various songs
Joni Mitchell, various songs
Steve Miller Band, “Fly Like an Eagle,” other songs
Marvin Gaye, “What’s Goin’ On” “Heard It On the Grapevine”
Aretha Franklin, “Respect”
Diana Ross and the Supremes, various songs
Bruce Springsteen, “Born in the USA,” “I’m on Fire,” songs from *Nebraska*
**English 101**  
**Paper Topic: Analysis of a Print Advertisement**

**Instructions:** In this paper, you'll analyze the multiple meanings of a print advertisement, explaining what the ad says and how it says it.

Print advertisements combine words and visual images to create an emotional response in consumers, a response that will motivate consumers to buy. Ads are rhetorically complex because, instead of enlisting a left-brained approach of rationally touting the product's virtues, advertisements typically aim to manipulate a consumer's emotions. In other words, advertisements are designed to appeal less to our rational thoughts and material needs than to our emotional insecurities, gut feelings, and unconscious desires (ways of knowing controlled by the right brain.) The complexity of this emotional appeal is intensified by the ambiguities of advertising rhetoric; ads are designed to evoke multiple meanings because they must tempt a variety of audiences.

Read all instructions before beginning. **Boldfaced terms** are found in the glossary. You will need to study and understand them before you begin drafting. Note that no documentation is necessary for this paper.

**Step 1: Find a full-page print advertisement.**

- Get your hands on at least three 8.5” by 11”-sized magazines that you can tear up. (Library magazines won't work for this project because it is unethical to mutilate them.) Leaf through your pile of magazines quickly, looking at the ads. Tear out several ads that catch your eye, keeping in mind the following hints:
  - Select only full-page ads. Avoid multiple-page, small, or oversized ads. Ads can be color or black-and-white. Don't write on your ads, since we may be photocopying and working on them in front of the class.
  - Look for ads that are that seem politically charged (conservative or liberal), or sexually provocative, or emotionally manipulative. Likewise, select ads that are pushing an agenda, or telling a story, or establishing a mystery, or making an outrageous claim.
  - Photocopies of ads won't work; you need to use originals.

Narrow your pile of choices down to three favorites.

**Step 2: Inventing regarding the symbols you find in the advertisements.**

- Decide what you think are the most important **symbols** or **icons** in each of your two or three favorite ads. Use clustering (group or solo) to **deconstruct** these symbols and icons. For each advertisement, generate at least two or three full pages of invention maps.
  - Most advertisements have no more than five central symbols/icons.
  - Some of your ads may spark many ideas for you; others may leave you dry. If you're inventing freely, at least one of the ads should ignite ideas that seem worth pursuing. Photocopy the ads if you want to mark up the photocopies with circles, notes, arrows, diagrams, etc.
Step 3: Drafting.

- Decide which advertisement intrigues you the most. Looking at it with both hard and soft focus, write out answers to the following questions before you begin drafting.
  - What emotions, prejudices, and desires do the ad's images and copy aim to arouse?
  - What audiences (groups of people) does the ad aim to persuade? What in the ad tells you the ad is intended to appeal to some people but not others? (Examples of audiences could be "white middle-class males who aspire to make a lot of money" or "lesbian feminists" or "aging baby-boomers or Generation Xers" or "guys who drive tractors and live in the midwest.") What are the hopes, desires, and biggest fears of these audiences as addressed in the ad? How does the ad try to persuade these audiences? Could the ad mean different things to its different audiences?
  - How does the ad's copy relate to its images? Do the images and copy balance, complement, or even contradict one another? What is the ratio of copy to image, and how does that ratio affect the ad's meanings? Remember that images tend to make a stronger impression than words.
  - What are the ad's hidden and double messages? Why are they hidden? Begin with the hidden/double meanings of the images and copy, then describe how these meanings arise from the ad as a whole. Describe the range of possible meanings.

Begin drafting. *Just sit down and write, keeping the following rules in mind:*

- Don’t worry about organization,
- Don’t stop to edit.
- Don't look back at what you’ve already written.
- Don’t stop writing until you have said everything you know about the topic.

Step 4: Revising.

- After cooling your draft, begin revising. Some questions to consider:
  - What is your thesis? What central impressions emerge from your draft? What seem to be the two or three most important elements of the advertisement - the elements your draft keeps coming back to? Your thesis can be framed around the topic using a formula like this one: "This ad is designed to persuade X to do Y by suggesting Z."
  - What evidence supports your thesis? Have you treated the ad’s symbols as conventional symbols (rather than private symbols whose meaning you alone understand)?
  - Is there any evidence that you’ve left out (suppressed) in arguing your thesis? How will readers disagree with your analysis? How can you "head them off at the pass" by anticipating and eliminating grounds for objection?

- Your completed paper must comprise the following elements. Papers missing elements will be severely penalized.
  - All three favorite advertisements and accompanying drafting webs.
  - One or more drafts and all feedback sheets, where applicable.
• The revised, proofread, polished paper.

• *Note: No documentation is necessary on this paper.*
English 101
Paper topic: Analysis of a TV Show

Instructions: For this paper, we'll view (as a class) and then students will write analyses of a half-hour episode of a TV situation comedy. You'll be using and refining the inventing, drafting, and revising techniques we've been discussing all semester.

The class will decide together which show we want to share viewing. Spend some time thinking about what shows you think would be appropriate. Film-showing logistics may be complicated; we may have to ask several class members to videotape a particular show so that we can have several copies to put on reserve. Depending on class demand, there will probably be at least one in-class viewing of the entire show and some class time for questions, rewinds, fast-forwards, etc. Depending on copyright restrictions, the film may not be available for individual check-out, so come to class when we're watching it.

Step 1: Viewing and inventing.

• View the TV show more than once, each time taking notes as you watch about
  • Characters (write a short sketch describing the name and qualities of each)
  • Central or important plot events. Summarize the story.
  • Important wordplay, significant lines, or other verbal elements.
  • Key visual symbols and icons you observed. Look carefully; things go by fast.
  • The significance of the advertisements that punctuate the half-hour show. What's being advertised? What does it tell you about the show's audience? About the show itself?
  • Possible overall meanings of the episode (there should be several).

• Using the inventing strategies of your choice, focus on the multiple possible meanings of the episode. Thinking back to your work on earlier papers ("Song," "Ad," narrow down the possible meanings to one or a group of related meanings that make sense to you.

  It is likely that we will have small-group and whole-class workshops to discuss possible meanings.

Step 2: Drafting.

• Using your invention maps as a guide, begin to construct your argument into a linear draft.

Step 3: Revising and polishing.

• Using the guidelines in Writing on Both Sides of the Brain, revise and polish your essay. We may spend class time in small-group and whole-class workshops working on this section of the process; check with your instructor.