

One skill that you will practice during your CS paper assignment is being able to see, and report on, a public conversation in science. You will need to see how authors of various texts are speaking *to* each other and, perhaps, to a broader audience. Doing this requires spending time with articles, time enough to give them a second look.

Giving texts that second look, with some focused questions in mind, will allow you to see how writers are talking to one another (whether or not they have an *exact* listener in mind, though in 19th-century science an exact intended listener was common). These questions include:

1. Who is the intended audience? (gen. public, astrophysicists, college students, etc.) And how do we know?
2. Do all the writers agree? If so, what can we point to in one as *confirming* or *reinforcing* another? If no, what can we point to as *adjusting*, *undermining*, or *contradicting* another?

Note: Often in the world of science writing, questions #1 and #2 are very connected. One writer purposely expresses agreement or disagreement with another, and that other person was definitely part of the audience the writer had in mind.

1. Am I maintaining the perspective of reporting on the conversation, rather than simply reacting and weighing in with my sense of good/bad, right/wrong? (This is different from pretending to be completely objective yourself.)

You have read a general introduction, a section introduction, an essay by Carl Sagan, and a selection from Robert Pirsig. These are selections from a book that attempts “a kind of corrective” to confront a commonly-held “closed and essentially rigid view of science and its practitioners.” With this strong stated theme for the book, we might expect agreement among the essays and selections. Then again, each selection was written by an individual. We should note that, as a compilation, the book has taken pieces that originally may have been written toward a variety of goals and fused them toward one audience.

Write one paragraph (4-6 sentences) that discusses what is going on among the parts of what you read, specifically answering questions 1 & 2. An answer to question 1 may or may not differ between the introductions, the Sagan essay, and the Pirsig selection.

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