

# The Undercover Parent

*Developed by Megan Munoz and Jennifer Fletcher*

## STUDENT VERSION

### Reading Selection for This Module

Coben, Harlan “The Undercover Parent.” *Nytimes.com*, New York Times. 16 Mar. 2008. Web. 15 Sept. 2012. <[http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/16/opinion/16coben.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/16/opinion/16coben.html?_r=0)>.

#### Supplementary Reading

Goodman, Ellen. “Big Brother Meets Big Mother.” *Boston.com*, Boston Globe. 2 Nov. 2007. Web. 15 Sept. 2012. <[http://www.boston.com/news/globe/editorial\\_opinion/oped/articles/2007/11/02/big\\_brother\\_meets\\_big\\_mother/](http://www.boston.com/news/globe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2007/11/02/big_brother_meets_big_mother/)>.

## Reading Rhetorically

### Prereading

#### Activity 1

#### Getting Ready to Read

Answer the following questions about parental monitoring with A for Agree, D for Disagree, SA for Strongly Agree, or SD for Strongly Disagree.

1. When I become a parent, I will spy on my teenaged son or daughter to find out what he or she is doing.
2. The Internet can be a dangerous place.
3. I know of friends who have chatted online with people they don't really know.
4. Cyber-bullying takes place on social networking sites (i.e., Facebook, MySpace, etc.) among my friends.
5. If you're old enough to go on the Internet, you're old enough to know the dangers.
6. Parents should monitor some of their teens' Internet use.
7. Teens' social networking profiles should be set at the highest privacy settings.
8. Teens have a right to privacy.

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**Activity 2****Taking Perspectives—Shifting to a Parent Perspective**

Now imagine that you are a parent of teenagers rather than a teenager yourself. Respond to the same eight statements from a parent's perspective. Will you do some "prying" into your children's private lives via the Internet? Complete the Four Corners activity once again, this time reacting to the statements as you think a parent might react. Then, complete a quickwrite journal response to the following sentence stems:

- As a parent of a teenager, I would take some precautionary measures in protecting my teen from the dangers of the Internet, which may include...
  - Some of the reasons I might spy on my daughter or son are...
  - As a parent of a teenager, I would most like to know ...
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**Activity 3****Exploring Key Concepts**

The following activity will help you think through the meanings and values of a key concept for this module: privacy.

Pairs Conversation: With a partner, discuss what the concept of "privacy" means to you. How would you define this term? How important is it?

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**Activity 4****Surveying the Text**

Before you read Coben's "The Undercover Parent," discuss the following questions:

1. What does the title "The Undercover Parent" reveal about the main idea of Coben's article?
2. Read the first paragraph of Coben's article. Near the end he writes, "At first I was repelled at this invasion of privacy. Now, after doing a fair amount of research, I get it." What do you predict the author's position on parental monitoring spyware will be?
3. Now read the last paragraph of Coben's article. How do you think Coben's position might have changed throughout the article?

## Activity 5

**Making Predictions and Asking Questions**

Complete each sentence stem below:

1. S represents the Subject, the general topic, content, and ideas contained in the text. Now complete the subject, beginning with the following sentence stem: The article is mainly about . . .
2. O represents the Occasion, the time and place of the piece, the situation at the time the article was written. Now complete the occasion, beginning with the following sentence stem: The events which led up to the writing of this piece include . . .
3. A represents Coben's Audience, the group of readers to whom this piece is directed. Now complete the audience information, beginning with the following sentence stem: From the words \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, it can be assumed that the author's intended audience is . . .
4. P represents the author's Purpose, or reason behind the text. Now predict Coben's purpose using the following sentence stem: The main purpose of this article is to . . .
5. S represents Coben's Speaking Persona, the voice he uses to tell the story. Now complete the speaker information using the following sentence stem: From the words \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, it can be assumed that the author (is) . . .
6. T refers to Tone, the emotional attitude a writer expresses toward the subject. We can think of tone as describing the writer's "voice"—for example, whether that voice is sarcastic, humble, bitter, or reverent. How do the words "confessed," "monitor," "all," and "repelled" contribute to the author's tone in the first paragraph? Use the following sentence stem to complete information about the tone of the piece: In paragraph 1, his attitude is . . .

## Activity 6

**Understanding Key Vocabulary**

Working with a partner, write each word on a separate index card. Then chart the connotation of the words' positive to negative characteristics. Be prepared to defend your choices after you and your partner have completed your chart. Remember that "connotation" means the emotional feeling or cultural association a word evokes in addition to its dictionary definition.

1. surveillance
2. monitor
3. protective

4. negligence
5. invasion of privacy
6. eavesdrop
7. overprotective
8. independence
9. parental responsibility
10. guard
11. nosy
12. watchful

## Reading

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### Activity 7

#### Reading for Understanding

Read “The Undercover Parent” silently to yourself, or follow along as your teacher reads the text aloud to you. As you read, think about the predictions you made. You may notice words you worked with in the previous activities. As you look at the words, think about personal connections you can make with the words you have studied and any others. Group them together if they relate.

Discuss the following questions with a classmate:

1. How accurate were your predictions?
  2. When you read the whole article, did anything surprise you?
  3. Are there any parts of the article that you found confusing?
  4. Return to your initial completion of the SOAPSTone, and complete your answers more fully and specifically. You may make changes to any predictions you made that were wrong or add details for clarification.
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### Activity 8

#### Considering Structure—Descriptive Outlining of the Text

Descriptive Outlining of the Text Notetaking Guide: “The Undercover Parent”

Paragraph #	Choose a phrase for summarizing what Coben does in each chunk.
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Using the sentence starter, write your summary following these guidelines:

Paragraphs 1-3	Introduces with an anecdote Presents the topic of the paper
Paragraphs 4-5	Acknowledges the hesitation Recognizes how parents feel
Paragraphs 6-10	Counters parental arguments Lists and rebuts counterarguments
Paragraphs 11-13	Argues/Contends/Claims that . . . Suggests that parents...
Paragraphs 14-15	Concedes to ... Encourages parents to...

**Activity 9****Considering the Structure of the Text—Quickwrite as Formative Assessment**

Respond to the following question:

In what ways, if any, should parents monitor their children’s Internet use?

When you have finished writing, exchange responses with your partner. Write a response to what your partner wrote. You may agree or disagree, ask a question, or suggest additional ideas. When you have both finished, your teacher will share some of your joint responses with the whole class.

**Activity 10****Noticing Language**

Answer the following questions:

1. Describe a time when your parents have been overprotective.
2. Why do you think Coben repeatedly uses the word “monitor” to describe the use of spyware? What are the connotations of the word “monitor”?
3. Why does Coben also use words like “invasion of privacy,” “eavesdropping,” and “surveillance” to describe parents’ electronic monitoring practices? Can you find examples of other words with negative connotations that Coben uses to describe the use of spyware? How do these words impact the writer’s tone?
4. Provide an example of a protective parent vs. a nosy parent.
5. What kinds of information do you think parents are looking for when they eavesdrop?

6. Describe when you've heard of a parent being charged with negligence or neglect on the news? Why do you think Coben uses the term "negligence" to describe parents who don't monitor Internet use at all?
7. What kind of independence do you expect to have on the Internet?
8. Why does Coben use words like "all," "every," "everything," and "entire" to describe electronic monitoring and online activity? How do these word choices characterize the scope of the problem?
9. When you are a parent of a teenager, what do you think your parental responsibility will be for your child's Internet use?
10. What are some things parents should be watchful of so they can guard their children from the dangers of the Internet?

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## Activity 11

### Annotating and Questioning the Text

Coben does not use data or studies to support his claims about parental monitoring, but he does offer evidence and supports his viewpoint with concrete details. Complete a rereading of the text in which you identify and mark the examples Coben uses to add evidence to support his argument. Then, identify the supporting details.

**First Highlighting:** Use a yellow highlighter to mark Coben's article. Highlight the examples Coben uses to make his argument.

**Second Highlighting:** Go through the text once more, this time with a pink highlighter. Highlight the details that add support to each piece of evidence highlighted in yellow from the previous highlighting.

**Responding to the Text:** In the margins of the text, use the following questions as guidelines for writing your reactions to the evidence Coben uses:

1. Have you also heard of the examples he uses?
2. Have you observed or experienced anything similar?
3. Which examples are serious? Which seem exaggerated to you?

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## Activity 12

### Analyzing Stylistic Choices

Answer the following questions on your own or in pairs or groups:

1. How does Coben characterize the challenges of parenting? What language does he use to suggest that parents face painful and sometimes morally ambiguous issues?

2. Coben begins six sentences in his short essay with the word “but” or “yet.” What is the rhetorical effect of the abrupt shift in direction that these sentences bring about? Why do you think Coben chose to start so many sentences with such a strong transition?
3. Why does Coben use colons to introduce important ideas in paragraphs 2 and 4? What’s the rhetorical effect of this punctuation choice?
4. Why does Coben create a contrast between “loving parents” and “faceless bureaucrats” in paragraph 4?
5. What is the purpose of Coben’s observation that “most parents already monitor their children, watching over their home environment, their school”?
6. Why does Coben use an interruption set off by dashes in paragraph 7 (“and this is where it gets tough”)? What is the rhetorical effect of this interruption?
7. Coben begins both paragraph 11 and paragraph 12 with rhetorical questions that he answers himself: “Am I suggesting eavesdropping on every conversation?” and “Will your teenagers find other ways of communicating to their friends when they realize you may be watching?” What is the rhetorical function of these questions and answers?
8. Why does Coben refer to computers as a “machine”? What are the connotations of this word?

## Postreading

### Activity 13

#### Summarizing and Responding—Rhetorical Précis and Response

1. Write a rhetorical précis (one paragraph) of the article. A précis is a concise summary of what you’ve read including both what the text says and what the text does rhetorically. In other words, a précis presents the what, how, why, and who of a writer’s argument. Use the précis template below, as well as the directions provided for you (from *Reading Rhetorically* by John C. Bean, Virginia A. Chappell, and Alice M. Gillam).
  - Sentence 1: Name of the author, genre, and title of work, date in parentheses; a rhetorically accurate verb (such as “claims,” “argues,” “asserts,” “suggests”); and a “that” clause containing the major assertion or thesis statement in the work.
  - Sentence 2: An explanation of how the author develops and supports the thesis, usually in chronological order.

- Sentence 3: A statement of the author's apparent purpose, followed by an "in order to" phrase.
  - Sentence 4: A description of the intended audience and/or the relationship the author establishes with the audience.
2. Write a response (one paragraph) to the article. A response is your personal reaction to the text that includes your opinion and reasons from your experiences, observations, or readings. For example, what personal experiences have you had that cause you to agree or disagree with Coben's argument? Why? Does the author make a particularly strong or weak argument? Explain.

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## Activity 14

### Peer Response to Summary and Response

Once you have completed your Summary and Response paper, evaluate what you've written. Check your paragraph for a position, concrete supporting details, and analysis of how your example helps prove your position. Your teacher will project the student example below to illustrate each part of the paragraph:

**Position:** I don't think parents need to go overboard when it comes to spyware. They should check on their kids to see what they're doing once in a while. If it is apparent that their kids are putting themselves in risk of danger, then they should have a conversation with them.

**Concrete Supporting Details:** For example, my little brother looks at pornography—that's not exactly good for him. My friends try to chat or date through MySpace without really knowing whom they are connecting with. The young and beautiful Megan Meier was only 15 when she fell in love with a "young man" on MySpace. After the "young man" broke up with her and told her hurtful cruel things, Megan hanged herself. It wasn't a young man who was flirting with her; it was an ex-friend's mom, who disliked Meier.

**Analysis:** If Megan's parents had monitored her Internet use, they may have noticed the mean comments and stepped in to be there for their daughter before she resorted to drastic measures. But I also think just being there for your kids every day can prevent these situations. That's why parents should start the conversation.

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## Activity 15

### Thinking Critically

Discuss the following questions with your partner:

#### Questions about Logic (Logos)

1. What kind of evidence does Coben use to support his claim?
2. Coben claims he did a "fair amount of research" on the subject of parental spyware. Where does he cite his research or reference it?

3. What well known cases of Internet danger does Coben cite? Do these effectively support his claim?
4. Coben addresses possible counterarguments throughout his essay. What are they?
5. Are there any counterarguments Coben did not consider?

#### **Questions about the Writer (Ethos)**

1. What does the author reveal about his background in the first paragraph, “Friends of mine confessed over dinner that they had put spyware on their 15-year-old son’s computer”?
2. Does the author seem knowledgeable about relationships between parents and their teen(s)?
3. What does the line “I want to know what’s being said in email and instant messages and in chat rooms” reveal about the writer’s background? Does this make him more trustworthy?
4. After using “I,” Coben then begins to use “we” (“we rely on . . .”, “we just dismiss . . .”), then “you” (“you shouldn’t monitor to . . .”, “you are there to . . .”). What does the change in pronoun use reveal? Does it contradict or support your answer to number 4 above (Logic)?
5. Coben closes with an anecdote about “one friend of mine . . .” who discovered his daughter using drugs and sleeping with her dealer. Does this anecdote add credible evidence to Coben’s research? Is it convincing?

#### **Questions about emotions (Pathos)**

1. Does Coben’s piece affect your concern over the dangers on the Internet?
2. Does the piece scare you about the possibility of your parents “spying” on you?
3. How does Coben try to create a level of concern with parents who may be reading this piece?
4. Some examples Coben uses (drug use and sleeping with the drug dealer, cyber-bullying’s effect of suicide, and chatting with pedophiles) are extreme cases of Internet danger. Other examples (online gambling, dangerous chatter, or watching prohibited videos) are less extreme. Which examples elicit a more emotional response? Why?
5. One technique Coben employs is the counterargument. He addresses what doubtful parents will argue in response to his claim. Rank which counterarguments are most effective.

**Activity 16****Reflecting on Your Reading Process**

Think about the skills and knowledge you've developed as a result of the rhetorical reading activities. Then discuss the following questions with a small group or partner:

1. What have you learned from your rhetorical reading of Coben's article? What do you want to learn next?
2. What reading strategies did you use or learn in this module? Which strategies will you use in reading other texts? How will these strategies apply in other classes?
3. In what ways, if any, is your reading process changing?
4. In what ways has your ability to read and discuss texts like "The Undercover Parent" improved?

## Connecting Reading to Writing Discovering What You Think

**Activity 17****Considering the Writing Task**

You will have extended time to plan, write, and revise an essay on the topic below. Before you begin writing, read the passage carefully and plan what you will say. Your essay should be as well organized and carefully written as you can make it.

Computer spyware that allows parents to monitor their teens' behavior might be scary, but it's a good idea. Of course, there is a fine line between being responsibly protective and irresponsibly nosy. You shouldn't monitor to find out if your daughter's friend has a crush on Kevin next door or that Mrs. Peterson gives too much homework or what schoolmate snubbed your son. You are there to start conversations and to be a safety net. To borrow from the national intelligence lexicon — and yes, that's uncomfortable — you're listening for dangerous chatter. Anything less would be neglect.

Adapted from "The Undercover Parent"  
—Harlan Coben

Explain Coben's argument, and discuss the ways in which you agree or disagree with his analysis and conclusion. Support your position by providing reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations, or readings.

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**Activity 18****Taking a Stance**

Review the quickwrite you completed in Activity 9 in which you explored your initial stance on what ways, if any, parents should monitor their children's Internet use. Then review what your partner wrote for this activity.

After completing a full rhetorical reading of the article, where do you stand on the issue now? Discuss your response with a partner or small group.

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**Activity 19****Gathering Evidence to Support Your Claims**

Choose evidence that supports your thesis statement. Evidence is probably the most important factor in writing an argument essay. Without solid evidence, your essay is nothing more than opinion; with it, your essay can be powerful and persuasive. If you supply convincing evidence, your readers will not only understand your position but may also agree with it.

Evidence can consist of facts, statistics, statements from authorities, and examples or personal stories. Examples and personal stories can be based on your own observations, experiences, and reading, but your opinions are not evidence. Other strategies, such as comparison/contrast, definition, and cause/effect, can be particularly useful in building an argument. Use any combination of evidence and writing strategies that supports your thesis statement.

In "The Undercover Parent," you can find several different types of evidence. The following are some examples:

**1. Examples and Personal Stories**

- ...friends of mine confessed over dinner that they had put spyware on their 15-year-old son's computer so they could monitor all he did online. At first I was repelled at this invasion of privacy. Now, after doing a fair amount of research, I get it (paragraph 1).
- First, we've all read about the young boy unknowingly conversing with a pedophile or the girl who was cyber bullied to the point where she committed suicide (paragraph 8).
- One friend of mine, using spyware to monitor his college bound straight-A daughter, found out that not only was she using drugs but also that she was sleeping with her dealer (paragraph 13).

2. Anticipate opposing points of view. In addition to stating and supporting your position, anticipating and responding to opposing views are important. Presenting only your side of the argument leaves half the story untold—the opposition’s half. If you acknowledge that there are opposing arguments and answer them, your argument is stronger. Coben anticipates several rebuttals parents might make in opposition to the use of spyware. He already wrote that he changed his own mind regarding the issue. By acknowledging the opposing argument, he increases his own credibility.
  - Some will say you should simply trust your child (paragraph 6).
  - Some will say that it’s better just to use parental blocks that deny access to risky sites (paragraph 7).
  - One of the most popular arguments against spyware is the claim that you are reading your teenager’s every thought (paragraph 10).
3. Find some common ground. Pointing out common ground between you and your opponent is also an effective strategy. Common ground refers to points of agreement between two opposing positions. For example, one person might be in favor of gun control and another strongly opposed. But they might find common ground—agreement—in the need to keep guns out of teenagers’ hands. Locating some common ground is possible in almost every situation. When Coben suggests that reading emails can feel like eavesdropping on every conversation, he clarifies his claim to be protective, not nosy.
  - He then suggests to parents that they just “listen for dangerous chatter” (paragraph 11).
4. Maintain a reasonable tone. Just as you probably wouldn’t win an argument by shouting or making mean or nasty comments, don’t expect your readers to respond well to such tactics. Keep the “voice” of your essay calm and sensible. Your readers will be much more open to what you have to say if they think you are a reasonable person.
  - Coben creates a concerned tone with his word choice, at times using strong words when striking concern into his reader, but making sure he selects “monitor” and “protect” when discussing the use of spyware. His readers will be more likely to accept monitoring and protecting their teens over spying and eavesdropping.

**Activity 20****Getting Ready to Write**

As you get ready to write, the first step is to carefully analyze the passage that you will be writing about. Answer the following questions in writing:

1. What are the author's major claims (assertions)?
2. Which claim is the strongest? The weakest? Has he or she left any out?
3. What evidence might you have to use in response to Coben's position?
4. Are there other articles you've read related to this subject, experiences, or observations you can rely on to support your opinion?

Now draft a possible position (a working thesis) for your essay. Write your thesis statement below; remember to support this position as you write. As you write your essay and figure out exactly what your argument is, you may want to go back and change your thesis.

*Example:* I agree with Coben that parents should consider using spyware as a protection for their teens on the Internet; it can serve to set limits and boundaries to help teens think about what is right and wrong.

## Writing Rhetorically Entering the Conversation

**Activity 21****Composing a Draft**

When you write an argument essay, it is important to maintain a tone that is appropriate for your audience as it relates to the situation and topic. Before drafting, consider to whom you are writing this piece, the topic, and your opinions associated with the topic. Also consider the points you want to make in support of your position and the final idea you'd like to leave your reader thinking about. Organize your ideas into a beginning (identification of Coben's argument and your own position in response), middle (supporting body paragraphs), and end (so what).

State your opinion on the topic in your thesis statement. To write a thesis statement for an argument essay, you must take a stand for or against an action or an idea. In other words, your thesis statement should be debatable—a statement that can be argued or challenged and will not be met with agreement by everyone who reads it.

Your thesis statement should introduce your subject and state your opinion about that subject.

- Not debatable: Spyware can be used as a parental monitoring device that records everything your teen does online.

This example is a definition (a fact based on the product). It is not an opinion and cannot be used as a thesis because it is not debatable.

## Activity 22

### Considering Structure

Organize your essay so that it presents your position as effectively as possible. By the end of your essay, you want your audience to agree with you, so you want to organize your essay in such a way that your readers can easily follow it. The number of paragraphs in your essay will vary depending on the nature of your assignment, but the following outline shows the order in which the features of an argument essay are most effective:

#### Introduction

- Background information that the audience may need
- Introduction and explanation of Coben's argument
- Statement of your opinion (your thesis statement)

#### Body Paragraphs

- It is important to incorporate specific evidence that directly supports your position (thesis statement). The evidence can come in the form of concrete examples from your experience, observations, or readings.
- Paragraphs that address opposing points of view should also be included.
- Include a response to an opposing point of view, then refute the opposing view's position or show how your position is better.

#### Conclusion

- So what factor—a new point of view or a concise statement that reinforces your position
- Call for action or agreement

### Example for “The Undercover Parent”

#### Introduction

- A vivid description of “today’s digital kids”

- Healy's own position that kids who spend lots of time on social media sites are the best adjusted

#### Body Paragraphs

- Research that supports that social media use is not harmful to adolescents
- Megan Mills and her mother's experiences with social media
- More research supporting the claim that online friendships are similar to offline ones

#### Conclusion

- Teens form identities separate from their parents using social media in ways that are similar to how they formed them without social media.

### Activity 23

#### Using the Words of Others

This activity will help you decipher the differences between quoting, summarizing, and paraphrasing. First, look through Coben's article and choose one point you might be able to use in your essay. Below you will copy the passage as a correctly punctuated and cited direct quotation. Then paraphrase the material in your own words, citing the material following MLA formatting. Lastly, use the same quote to create a summary you will respond to with your own opinion, again using correct citation. You will use this exercise in your essay later. An example of each is provided below.

1. Copy one idea from Coben's article from the following points:

*Example:* "One of the most popular arguments against spyware is the claim that you are reading your teenager's every thought, that in today's world, a computer is the little key-locked diary of the past. But posting thoughts on the Internet isn't the same thing as hiding them under your mattress. Maybe you should buy your children one of those key-locked diaries so that they too can understand the difference" (Coben 1).

MLA style requires in-text documentation for every direct quotation, indirect quotation, paraphrase, and summary. If the author's name is given in the text of what you are writing, only the page number should be given in parentheses at the end of the sentence containing the author's words or ideas. If the author's name is not mentioned, then their name and the page number are required in parentheses.

2. Using the same direct quotation from above, paraphrase it by presenting Coben's idea in your own words. Remember to use proper citation.

*Example:* Coben suggests that parents won't use spyware because it's like reading their kid's diary. However, Coben points out that diaries are much more private than what is posted online and kids need to understand that (1).

3. Finally, summarize Coben's idea and respond using your own voice. Here you are entering into a conversation with Coben. What is your position in response to his? Agree or disagree with the summary you wrote, again using correct citation.

*Example:* Coben claims that parents won't read what their kids post online because it feels as though they'd be reading a diary. Coben is right about the messages some teens post online; they forget that their words can be seen by hundreds when in a diary you're only having a conversation with yourself. That's why it's a good idea to talk about the difference between a private diary and what seems like a private online post, as Coben suggested (1).

## Activity 24

### Negotiating Voices—Completing Sentence Frames

In Coben's article "The Undercover Parent," he imagines what parents may say in response to his encouragement to download spyware to monitor their children's Internet use. To introduce each of these counterarguments, he writes: "Some will say..." and completes the sentence with a paraphrase of what he has heard parents say in defense of not spying.

Imagining what others might say in defense of privacy, complete the following sentence frames:

1. Many of my friends post comments that they would like to keep private from their parents. One of my friends claims that spyware is....
2. Although some of my friends are friends with their parents on Facebook, they agree that they should control the privacy setting because...

Now, imagining what others might say in defense of using spyware, complete the following sentence frames;

1. When my classmates and I were asked to imagine being parents of a teenager faced with the choice of installing monitoring spyware, the majority of us imagined that we would use spyware because....
2. Parents who have difficulty talking to their teens about their Internet activities may want to consider spyware to . . . .

## Revising and Editing

### Activity 25

#### Revising the Draft—Peer Group Work

As your peers respond, take notes on your paper for possible revisions to make. Note weak examples and any possible reader's opposition(s). Also note any viewpoints that you may have not considered.

#### Individual Work

After listening to three other papers and hearing reactions to your own, you should be prepared to revise your drafts on the basis of your notes and peer feedback. Use the following set of questions as a guideline for revising your paper:

1. Does my thesis offer a debatable position?
2. Have I clarified Coben's argument?
3. Which of my examples are most effective?
4. Which examples need more details?
5. Do I need to analyze my examples more thoroughly to show how they relate to my position?
6. Are there any examples that I need to omit because they didn't prove my thesis?
7. How did my peers react to my tone? Do I need to make stronger word choices, or tone some words down to sound knowledgeable and credible?
8. Have I addressed different points of view?
9. Does my conclusion reinforce my position?

### Activity 26

#### Revising Rhetorically

Consider each of the following questions to help you think about to whom you are writing, how you want to sound to that audience, and in which context (or for what purpose) you are completing the writing assignment:

1. Who will read your essay? What do your readers probably think or believe about your topic? How will your audience likely react to your position? How much background information will they need?
2. What is your purpose in writing? What questions are you trying to answer? What are you trying to accomplish: informing, persuading, suggesting?

3. What sort of image do you want to project to your reader? How will you achieve it? What words or type of language might you choose to help construct the image you want to project (ethos)?
4. What are your main arguments (Aristotle would call this “logos.”)? What support do you have? (For example, you can use facts, statistics, and quotes from authorities, personal experience, anecdotes, stories, scenarios, and examples.) What is your strongest evidence?
5. Are there any emotional appeals (pathos) you want to use? Do strong emotional examples work for the topic or should they be more subtle? Which emotions should you appeal to (fear, passion, love, concern, pride)?
6. If readers disagree with your thesis or the validity of your support, what would they say? How would you answer them?

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## Activity 27

### Considering Stylistic Choices

Take your audience into consideration as you review and revise your essay. Assume that your audience is well informed generally, but may not have the specific knowledge that you have gained by reading and discussing as you moved through “The Undercover Parent” unit. Remember that when you use others’ words or ideas, you need to provide your readers with information for your sources to give them credibility. In a timed-writing situation, you will not have access to sources, but you can still refer to information you learned in a class, read in an article, or found from watching a news report. Just be sure to mention where you found it (not a formal reference but an acknowledgment that it comes from another source).

Consider the words you chose to use as well. The words you chose create your tone of voice. It is important to maintain an appropriate voice for your reading audience. In a timed-writing situation, you could be writing for a group of teachers you may or may not know. Nevertheless, you will want to maintain a tone of maturity and academic voice.

Now discuss the following questions with a partner or small group:

1. How will the language you have used affect your reader’s response?
2. Which words or synonyms have you repeated? Why?
3. What figurative language have you used? Why did you use it?
4. What effects will your choices of sentence structure and length have on the reader?

5. In what ways does your language help convey your identity and character as a writer?
6. Is your language appropriate for your intended audience?

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## Activity 28

### Editing the Draft

You now need to work with the grammar and mechanics of your draft to make sure that your use of language is effective and conforms to the guidelines of standard written English.

#### Individual Work

Edit your draft based on the information you have received from your instructor or tutor. Use the Editing Checklist (Appendix K, Part II) provided by your teacher. The following suggestions will also help you edit your own work.

#### Editing Guidelines for Individual Work

- Read your essay aloud to yourself. This will slow you down and allow you to hear your errors. If possible have someone else read it aloud to you.
- In order to focus on individual words, read your paper backwards.
- Check for sentence variety. Do your sentences tend to begin the same way, have the same length, and/or appear to be of the same type? Recast some to make them shorter or longer; compound, complex, or simple; and make sure their beginnings differ.
- Only look for one type of error at a time. Then go back and look for a second type, and if necessary, a third.
- Use the dictionary to check spelling and confirm that you've chosen the right word for the context.

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## Activity 29

### Responding to Feedback

Review the feedback on your essay that you received from your peers and/or teacher. Discuss the following questions with a partner or small group:

1. What are the main concerns my readers had in reading my draft?
2. Do all of the readers agree with my position?
3. What global changes should I consider? (thesis, arguments, evidence, organization)
4. What do I need to add?

5. What do I need to delete?
6. What sentence-level and stylistic problems do I need to correct?
7. What kinds of grammatical and usage errors do I have? How can I correct them?

Your teacher will let you know if you will be applying this feedback to another revision of your essay or to future writing assignments.

## Activity 30

### Reflecting on Your Writing Process

When you have completed your own essay, answer these six questions:

1. What was most difficult about this assignment?
2. What was easiest?
3. What did you learn about arguing by completing this assignment?
4. What do you think are the strengths of your argument? Place a wavy line by the parts of your essay that you feel are very good.
5. What are the weaknesses, if any, of your paper? Place an X by the parts of your essay you would like help with. Write any questions you have in the margin.
6. What did you learn from this assignment about your own writing process—about preparing to write, writing the first draft, revising, and editing?