

INVENTION

“All human beings should try to learn before they die what they are running from, and to, and why.”

—James Thurber

Invention, an act of discovery, involves asking questions where we had assumed we knew the answers. For this chapter, it means asking why something occurs (or has occurred) and going beyond the first (and second) guess.

The following sections are designed to help you through the invention process: in Point of Contact to find a topic; in Analysis to imagine unseen causes; in Public Resonance to consider the ways your topic extends outward and affects the public; in Thesis to focus your ideas to a particular insight; and in Rhetorical Tools to explore a range of possible support strategies. The Invention Questions in each section are not meant to be answered directly in your final written assignment; they are meant to help you explore and develop revelatory ideas.

Point of Contact

The search for a cause begins with a question: Why did something happen? Why does something continue? What causes some phenomenon? The following questions can help you to explore possible topics. After you have decided on a particular topic, go to the Analysis section to continue your search for causes.

Work

- Why are some sections/groups/teams more successful than others?
- Why is workplace efficiency up or down?
- Why are profits for the company or organization up or down?
- Why are some workers more content or fulfilled than others?

Local Events

- Why is urban sprawl taking place in your community?
- Why is a local sports team winning or losing?
- What makes one school perform better than others?
- Why are some areas of town more policed than others?
- Why do so many yards look the same?