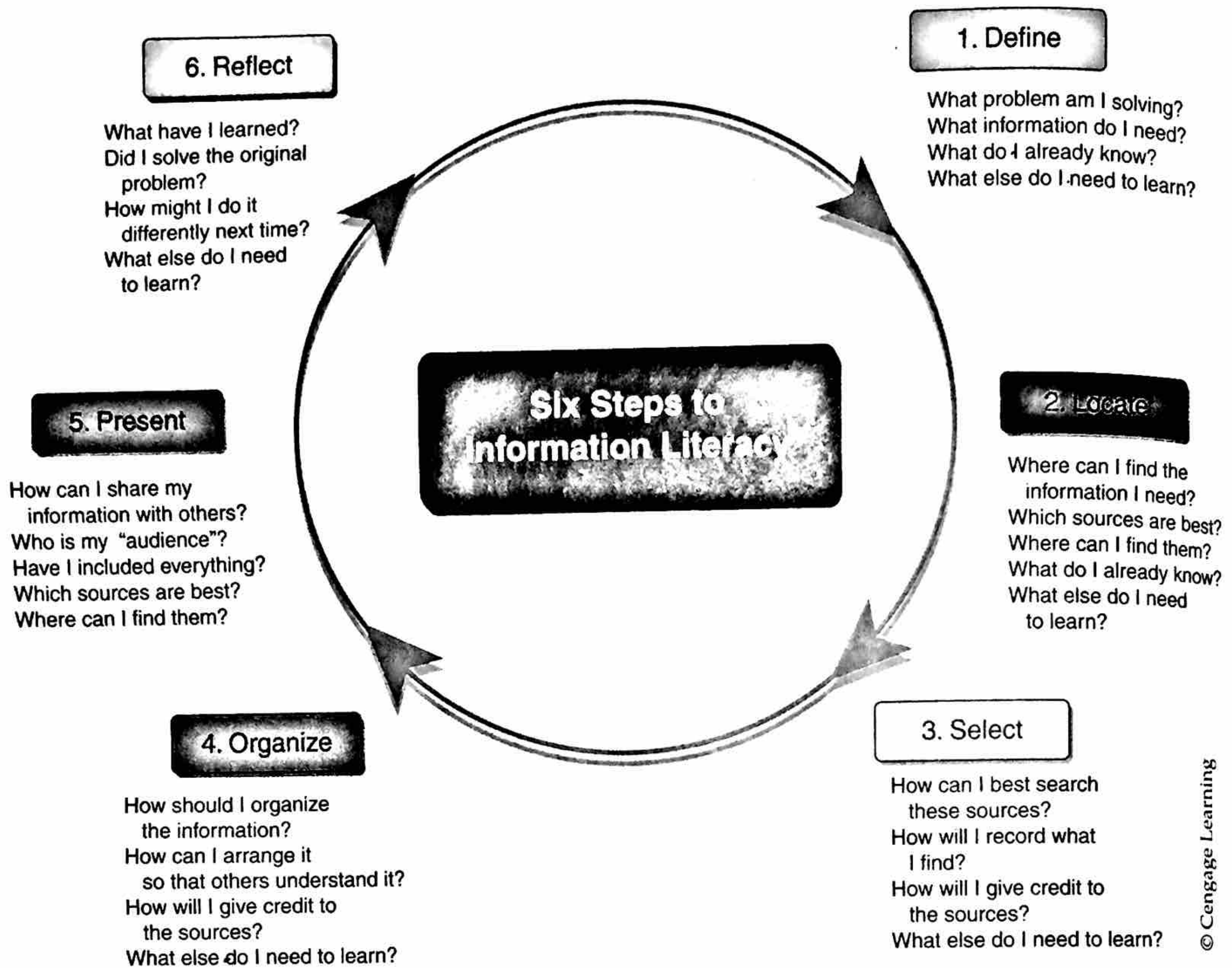


Here is one way to visualize the research process presented in this chapter:



PRACTICE 1

Choose one of the following: either your favorite paper written this term or a paper on a topic assigned by your instructor. Then read through your paper, marking any spots where an outside source—fact, statistic, expert opinion, or quotation—might strengthen your essay. Write down any questions that you want to answer.

B. Finding and Evaluating Outside Sources: Library and Internet

The next step is finding the information you seek—or something even better. This section will show you how to find sources in the library and on the Internet.

* From G. Wood, "Academic original sin: Plagiarism, the Internet, and librarians," *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 30(3), April 9, 2004, pp. 237–242. Used by permission.

Doing Research at the Library

Visit your college library, with your notes from Practice 1 in hand. Ask about any print guides, workshops, or websites that show you how to use the library facilities. Introduce yourself to the reference librarian, tell him or her what subject you are exploring, and ask for help finding and using any of these resources in your search:

1. **Online Catalog or Card Catalog.** This will show you what books are available on your topic. For every book that looks like it might be interesting, jot down its title, author, and call number (the number that lets you find the book in the library).
2. **Periodical Indexes.** The more current your topic, the more likely you are to find interesting information in periodicals—magazines, journals, and newspapers—rather than books. *The Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature* is a print resource, listing articles by subject. The library will also have computerized indexes like *InfoTrac*, *EBSCOhost*, and *Lexis Nexis*. Ask the librarian to help you explore these exciting resources.
3. **Statistical Sources.** If you are looking for statistics and facts, the library has volumes like *The Statistical Abstract of the United States* with fascinating information on population, education, immigration, crime, economic issues, and so on.
4. **Encyclopedias and Reference Books.** General books on subjects like geology or psychology can be helpful. Special reference books and encyclopedias exist for almost every area—for example, world soccer statistics, terrorism, or the birds of South America.

As you explore, you might see why experienced researchers often love what they do. They never know what they will find, and they learn the darnedest, most interesting things. However, they must **evaluate** each source. If you are writing about the space shuttle, a current article in the *Chicago Tribune* would more likely impress readers as a truthful source than, say, a story in the *National Enquirer* called "Space Aliens Ate My Laundry." Look at the date of a book or article; if your subject is current, your sources should be too. Is the author a respected expert on this subject? Is the information balanced and objective? The librarian can help you find strong sources.

Once you discover good information that will strengthen your essay, take clear and careful notes, using 4×6 note cards or your notebook. Use the techniques you learned in Chapter 18 to summarize and quote directly and indirectly; these will help you avoid accidental plagiarism. Write down everything you might need later. Print or buy copies of an article or book pages that are important. Don't leave the library without this information:

- Book:** Author name(s), title and subtitle, year of publication, publisher and location of publisher, exact pages of material quoted or summarized.
- Magazine:** Author name(s), title of article, title of magazine or journal, year, month, day of publication, volume and number, page numbers.

CARMEN'S RESEARCH PROCESS

Carmen visits her college library and gets help from the librarian using the computerized database *EBSCOhost*. Because Carmen's topic—student credit-card debt—is current, she assumes that newspapers and magazines will give her the most up-to-date information. Searching "credit-card debt," she finds a recent *Chicago Tribune* article called "Big Debt on Campus: Credit Offers Flood the Quad." She is surprised and excited to learn that credit problems like her friend's are a growing national problem. She copies the article and adds it to her source folder.

PRACTICE 2

In your college or local library, find the answers to the following questions; write the answers and the complete source for each piece of information. Your instructor might wish to have you work in competing teams.

1. List the full titles of five novels by Toni Morrison. What major prize did she win and in what year?
2. How many acres of rain forest are destroyed every day in Brazil?
3. What is the average hourly wage of men in the United States? Of women?
4. How many murders were committed in your town or city last year? Is the number up or down from ten years ago?
5. What was the newspaper headline in your hometown or city on the day and year of your birth? What stories dominated page 1?

PRACTICE 3

In your college or local library, find at least two excellent additions from outside sources that will improve your essay: a fact, statistic, example, quotation, or expert opinion. Write the information from each source precisely on 4 × 6 note cards, using quotation marks as you learned in Chapter 18, Part C, or make copies. Write down everything you will need later to cite the source: the book or magazine, article name, author name(s), and so on. Spell everything perfectly; copy exact punctuation of titles, and don't forget page numbers.

Doing Research on the Internet

The Internet is a wonderful source of information on just about everything—a great place to brainstorm, get ideas as you research, and find certain facts. However, it is harder to evaluate information on the Web than in print, as this section will explain, so be careful.

If you have Internet access at the library or at home, use one of the search engines below. Type in search words that narrow your subject the same way you narrow a topic in writing—for example, *credit-card debt*, *college students*. Spell

orrectly, and try different words if necessary. Chances are, you will have too many hits, rather than too few.

Google	www.google.com
Yahoo!	www.yahoo.com
Bing	www.bing.com

Evaluate each website carefully. Who sponsors the site? How balanced and unbiased is the information? Notice also the date of the site and article; many websites come and go in the night. With practice, Web researchers get better at spotting good and not-so-good sources of information. One tip is the Web address, or Uniform Resource Locator (URL) of each site. The last part of a URL indicates the type of organization that owns the site:

.com	=	company (aims to sell something and make a profit)
.org	=	nonprofit organization (aims to promote a cause)
.gov	=	government (provides many public information sites)
.edu	=	college or educational institution (aims to inform the public and promote itself)

For instance, if you are researching *asthma in children, treatments*, a government-sponsored health site might give more unbiased information than a company that sells asthma medications or a personal website called *Troy's Asthma Story*. For more help evaluating websites, search "evaluating Web sources" or visit <http://lib.nmsu.edu/instruction/evalcrit.html>.

As in the library—to avoid plagiarism later—take good notes, clearly marking words and ideas taken from your sources. Before you leave a website you wish to quote, cut and paste or print the material you want to refer to, and make sure you have full information to cite the source later in your paper:

Website: URL address, owner of site, author name(s), title of article, date written (if available), and date you accessed the website.

CARMEN'S RESEARCH PROCESS

Carmen chooses the Google search engine and types the search words, "college students, credit-card debt." The search engine returns several thousand sources! Carmen scrolls quickly through many different hits, until she finds one that looks promising. It's the website for Sallie Mae, a federal loan provider for college students. Carmen takes notes on a number of useful statistics and makes sure she has the URL address and other pertinent information before she logs off the computer.

PRACTICE 4

Go to www.fedstats.gov and learn how to find statistics quickly and easily. Answer these questions:

1. How many people live in the United States?
2. What is the leading cause of death in American men? Women?
3. What is the leading export from your state?
4. How many different ethnic groups live in your state?
5. How many new AIDS cases were reported in your state last year? What groups were hardest hit?

PRACTICE 5

Using one of the suggested search engines, find at least two good pieces of information to strengthen your essay—facts, statistics, expert opinions, and so on. Hone your search words and evaluate what you find. Take careful notes, and cut and paste or print the information you need. Did you find any good material that you were not expecting? (Did you find exciting information on another subject that you might use in another paper? Be sure to take down any information you might use in the future.)

CHAPTER 23

Revising for Language Awareness

- A: Exact Language: Avoiding Vagueness
- B: Concise Language: Avoiding Wordiness
- C: Fresh Language: Avoiding Triteness
- D: Figurative Language: Similes and Metaphors

Although it is important to write grammatically correct English, good writing is more than just correct writing. Good writing has life, excitement, and power. It captures the attention of the reader and compels him or her to read further.

The purpose of this chapter is to increase your awareness of the power of words and your skill at making them work for you. The secret of effective writing is **revision**. Do *not* settle for the first words that come to you, but go back over what you have written, replacing dull or confusing language with exact, concise, fresh, and sometimes figurative language.

A. Exact Language: Avoiding Vagueness

Good writers express their ideas as *exactly* as possible, choosing *specific*, *concrete*, and *vivid* words and phrases. They do not settle for vague terms and confusing generalities.

Which sentence in each of the following pairs gives the more *exact* information? That is, which uses specific and precise language? Which words in these sentences make them sharper and more vivid?

Now compare a similar account written in general and inexact language:

The last time I saw my grandmother, she was praying next to her bed. Her long hair was down, covering her. In the day, she always wore it up. I remember that her room had a kerosene lamp. I don't speak Kiowa, so I didn't understand what she was saying, but there was definitely something sad about it. I think I knew somehow that I was not going to see her again.

You do not need a large vocabulary to write exactly and well, but you do need to work at finding the right words to fit each sentence. As you revise, cross out vague or dull words and phrases and replace them with more exact terms. When you are tempted to write *I feel good*, ask yourself exactly what *good* means in that sentence: *relaxed? proud? thin? in love?* When people walk by, do they *flounce, stride, lurch, wiggle, or sneak?* When they speak to you, do people *stammer, announce, babble, murmur, or coo?* Question yourself as you revise; then choose the right words to fit that particular sentence.

PRACTICE 1

Lively verbs are a great asset to any writer. The following sentences contain four overused general verbs—*to walk, to see, to eat, and to be*. In each case, replace the general verb in parentheses with a more exact verb *chosen to fit the context of the sentence*. Use a different verb in every sentence. Consult a dictionary or thesaurus* if you wish.

EXAMPLES In no particular hurry, we strolled (walked) through the botanical gardens.

Jane fidgets (is) at her desk and watches the clock.

1. With guns drawn, three police officers _____ (walked) toward the door of the warehouse.
2. As we stared in fascination, an orange lizard _____ (walked) up the wall.
3. The four-year-old _____ (walked) onto the patio in her mother's high-heeled shoes.
4. A furious customer _____ (walked) into the manager's office.
5. Two people who _____ (saw) the accident must testify in court.
6. We crouched for hours in the underbrush just to _____ (see) a rare white fox.
7. Three makeshift wooden rafts were _____ (seen) off the coast this morning.
8. For two years, the zoologist _____ (saw) the behavior of bears in the wild.
9. There was the cat, delicately _____ (eating) my fern!
10. Senator Gorman astounded the guests by loudly _____ (eating) his soup.

* A thesaurus is a book of *synonyms*—words that have the same or similar meanings.

11. All through the movie, she _____ (ate) hard candies in the back row.
12. Within seconds, Dan had bought two tacos from a street vendor and _____ (eaten) them both.
13. During rush hour, the temperature hit 98 degrees, and dozens of cars _____ (were) on the highway.
14. A young man _____ (is) on a stretcher in the emergency room.
15. Workers who _____ (are) at desks all day should make special efforts to exercise.
16. Professor Nuzzo _____ (was) in front of the blackboard, excited about this new solution to the math problem.

PRACTICE 2

The following sentences contain dull, vague language. Revise them using vivid verbs, specific nouns, and colorful adjectives. As the examples show, you may add and delete words.

EXAMPLES A dog lies down in the shade.

A mangy collie flops down in the shade of a parked car

My head hurts

My head throbs

I have shooting pains in the left side of my head.

1. Everything about the man looked mean.

2. I feel good today for several reasons.

3. A woman in unusual clothes went down the street.

4. The sunlight made the yard look pretty.

5. What the company did bothered the townspeople.

6. The pediatrician's waiting room was crowded.

7. As soon as he gets home from work, he hears the voice of his pet asking for dinner.

8. The noises of construction filled the street.

9. When I was sick, you were helpful.

10. This college does things that make the students feel bad.

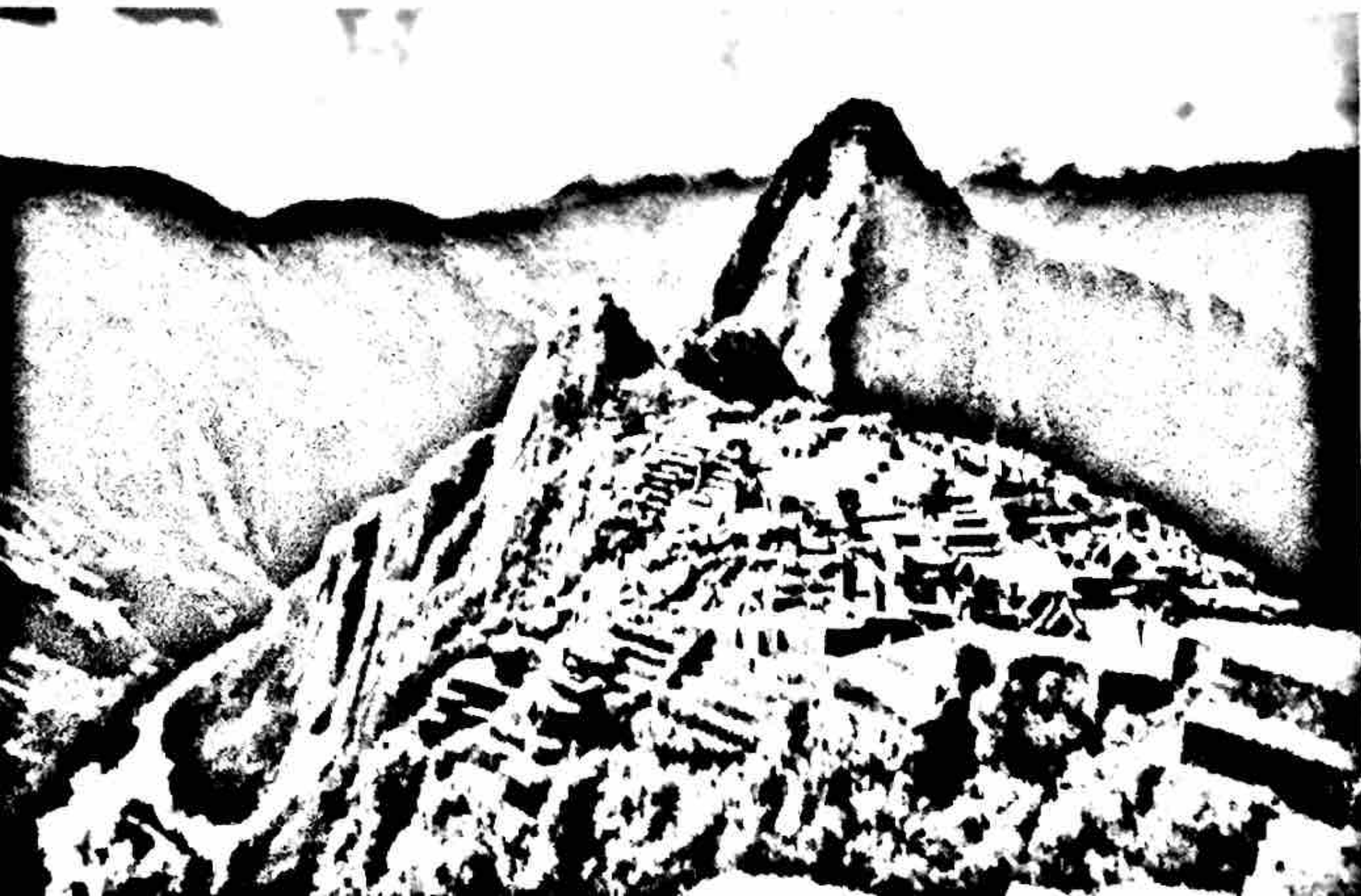
PRACTICE 3

A word that works effectively in one sentence might not work in another sentence. In searching for the right word, always consider the **context** of the sentence into which the word must fit. Read each of the following sentences for meaning. Then circle the word in parentheses that *most exactly fits* the context of the sentence.

EXAMPLE Machu Picchu, which means "old peak" in the Quechua (words, language, lingo), is known as the "Lost City of the Incas."

1. Ever since the ruins of Machu Picchu were (buried, invented, discovered) in 1911 by Yale archaeologist Hiram Bingham, people all over the world have been fascinated by this mysterious site.
2. The ancient city (perches, hangs, wobbles) high atop a peak in the rugged Andes Mountains of Peru.

3. In the 1400s, using gray Andes granite, the Inca people (arranged, constructed, piled) the palace, temples, baths, and houses of Machu Picchu.
4. The carved stone blocks are so (strong, massive, humongous) that thousands of men would have been needed to move just one of them into place.
5. The (sophisticated, fluid, bubbly) plumbing and drainage system that brought running water to Machu Picchu still works today.
6. The city served not only as a (hideout, getaway, retreat) and fortress for the nobility but also as an observatory.
7. Many ceremonies took place around the Intihuatana stone, a kind of sundial that (casts, manufactures, emits) no shadow at noon on the two equinoxes, in March and in September.
8. According to legend, when spiritually sensitive people touch their foreheads to the Intihuatana stone, it (magically, accidentally, weirdly) opens their vision to the spirit world.
9. In 1533, Spanish conquistadors (ruthlessly, destructively, properly) destroyed the Inca civilization, but the invaders never found Machu Picchu.
10. Nevertheless, the cloud-capped city was (abandoned, missed, set aside) for 400 years.
11. Its rediscovery (torched, entered, ignited) the imaginations of scientists and adventurers, who still labor to unlock Machu Picchu's secrets.
12. Today many tourists (enjoy, battle, are awed by) altitude sickness just to trek up the mountain and gaze upon this beautiful, well-preserved sanctuary.



PRACTICE 6

Rewrite this essay *concisely*, cutting out all unnecessary words. Reword or combine sentences if you wish, but do not alter the meaning.

DR. ALICE HAMILTON, MEDICAL PIONEER

At the age of forty years old, Dr. Alice Hamilton became a pioneer in the field of industrial medicine. In 1910, the governor of Illinois appointed her to investigate rumors that people who were doing the work in Chicago's paint factories were dying from lead poisoning. The result of her investigation was the first state law that was passed to protect workers.

The following year, the U.S. Department of Labor hired this woman, Dr. Hamilton, to study industrial illness throughout the country of the United States. In the next decade, she researched and studied many occupational diseases, including tuberculosis among quarry workers and silicosis—clogged lungs—among sandblasters. To gather information, Dr. Hamilton went to the workplace—deep in mines, quarries, and underwater tunnels. She also spoke to the workers in their homes where they lived.

With great zeal, Dr. Hamilton spread her message about poor health conditions on the job. What happened with her reports is that they led to new safety regulations, workers' compensation insurance, and improved working conditions in many industries. She wrote many popular articles and spoke to groups of interested citizens. In the year of 1919, she became the first woman to hold courses and teach at Harvard University. Her textbook which she wrote, *Industrial Poisons in the U.S.*, became the standard book on the subject. By the time she died in 1970—she was 101—she had done much to improve the plight of many working people. The reason why she is remembered today is because she cared at a time when many others seemed not to care at all.

C. Fresh Language: Avoiding Triteness

Fresh writing uses original and lively words. It avoids **clichés**, those tired and trite expressions that have lost their power from overuse.

Which sentence in each pair that follows contains fewer expressions that you have heard or read many times before?



PRACTICE 7

Cross out clichés and trite expressions in the following sentences and perhaps replace them with fresh and exact language of your own.

1. Getting a good job in this cold cruel economy can be easier said than done.
2. Many Americans are living hand to mouth, and even college graduates may be hitting a brick wall in the job market.
3. The keys are to keep your chin up and think outside the box, says career coach Bob Martinez.
4. He offers three useful tips for job seekers who are between a rock and a hard place.
5. First, don't cling like there's no tomorrow to one limited career goal.
6. If your dream is to become assistant marketing director for the Portland Trail Blazers, consider starting at any sports organization as low man on the totem pole by getting coffee and helping out.
7. Don't throw out the baby with the bathwater by ruling out an internship.
8. Next, don't rely only on tried and true websites like *monster.com*.
9. Reach out and touch someone by networking in person because having a contact inside the company is often the best way to get hired.
10. Last but not least, at job fairs or interviews, set yourself apart by bringing a writing sample or demonstrating your people skills.

D. Figurative Language: Similes and Metaphors

One way to add sparkle and exactness to your writing is to use an occasional simile or metaphor. A **simile** is a comparison of two things using the word *like* or *as*:

"He was *as ugly as* a wart." —Anne Sexton

"The frozen twigs of the huge tulip poplar next to the hill clack in the cold *like* tinsnips." —Annie Dillard

A **metaphor** is a similar comparison *without* the word *like* or *as*:

"My soul is a dark forest." —D. H. Lawrence
Love is a virus.