

An Issue of Interest to You: A Sequence of Three Invitations

Think about a controversial topic that is currently being debated in the media and that holds particular interest for you: something that you've heard about on the television news recently or read about in the newspaper, or something that you've been discussing with your friends (gun control? tuition hikes? immigration?). If an interesting issue doesn't come to mind, grab a copy of *The Daily Iowan*, *The Des Moines Register*, *Newsweek*, or some other periodical and flip through it, scanning the headlines for a word or phrase that catches your attention.

Invitation #1: Once you have an issue that you're interested in, talk on paper for a while about what you think about this topic. What knowledge of this issue do you already have? What opinions do you hold? Is this also an issue in your native country or hometown or state? If so, please talk about the importance of this topic in that place.

Invitation #2: Now that you have explored your knowledge and opinions about this issue, think of someone you know who would disagree with you on this topic. This might be a relative, a friend, a past or present teacher, or it could be a character you create. Think about what this person would say on this topic, the kind of knowledge he/she would have, the reasons why he/she would think so differently about the issue. Then, pretend that you are this person and talk on paper about your views. Write in the first person (use "I") and feel free to experiment with the voice of your character. Think not only about *what* this person would say but also about *how* he/she would say it.

Invitation #3: The last part of this invitation might be the most fun. Now that you've sorted out your own ideas and the ideas of your character, create a dialogue between the two of you in which you discuss/debate/argue about this issue. You might choose to write a script including just the words that each of you says, or you might choose to create a story or a scene (e.g., lunch in a crowded restaurant, or a walk along the beach) in which you have this discussion. You can be as straightforward or as creative as you like. Will you change the mind of your opponent? Will he/she change your mind? Will you agree to disagree?