Hamlet's Soliloquy
(from Shakespeare's Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, Act III, Section 1)

HAMLET:

To be, or not to be—that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer *it is
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
And by opposing end them. To die, to sleep— 5
No more—and by a sleep to say we end
The heartache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to. 'Tis a consumption* *resolution
Devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep—
To sleep—perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub,* *problem 10
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,* *life
Must give us pause. There's the respect
That makes calamity* of so long life. *tragedy
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
Th' oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,* *contempt
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of th' unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus* make 20
With a bare bodkin*? Who would fardels' bear,
*dagger
*burdens
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscovered country, from whose bourn
No traveler returns, puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,
And thus the native hue* of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprise of great pitch and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry
And lose the name of action.
Excerpt from

It's Not About the Bike: My Journey Back to Life

by Lance Armstrong with Sally Jenkins

1. I want to die at a hundred years old with an American flag on my back and the star of Texas on my helmet, after screaming down an Alpine descent on a bicycle at 75 miles per hour. I want to cross one last finish line as my stud wife and my 10 children applaud, and then I want to lie down in a field of those famous French sunflowers and gracefully expire, the perfect contradiction to my once-anticipated poignant early demise.

2. A slow death is not for me. I don’t do anything slow, not even breathe. I do everything at a fast cadence: eat fast, sleep fast. It makes me crazy when my wife, Kristin, drives our car, because she brakes at all the yellow caution lights, while I squirm impatiently in the passenger seat.

3. “Come on, don’t be a skirt,” I tell her.


5. I’ve spent my life racing my bike, from the back roads of Austin, Texas, to the Champs-Elysées, and I always figured if I died an untimely death, it would be because some rancher in his Dodge 4x4 ran me headfirst into a ditch. Believe me, it could happen. Cyclists fight an ongoing war with guys in big trucks, and so many vehicles have hit me, so many times, in so many countries, I’ve lost count. I’ve learned how to take out my own stitches: all you need is a pair of fingernail clippers and a strong stomach.

6. If you saw my body underneath my racing jersey, you’d know what I’m talking about. I’ve got marbled scars on both arms and discolored marks up and down my legs, which I keep clean-shaven. Maybe that’s why trucks are always trying to run me over; they see my sissy-boy calves and decide not to brake. But cyclists have to shave, because when the gravel gets into your skin, it’s easier to clean and bandage if you have no hair.

7. One minute you’re pedaling along a highway, and the next minute, boom, you’re face-down in the dirt. A blast of hot air hits you, you taste the acrid, oily exhaust in the roof of your mouth, and all you can do is wave a fist at the disappearing taillights.

8. Cancer was like that. It was like being run off the road by a truck, and I’ve got the scars to prove it. There’s a puckered wound in my upper chest just above my heart, which is where the catheter was implanted. A surgical line runs from the right side of my groin into my upper thigh, where they cut out my testicle. But the real prizes are two deep half-moons in my scalp, as if I was kicked twice in the head by a horse. Those are the leftovers from brain surgery.
When I was 25, I got testicular cancer and nearly died. I was given less than a 40 percent chance of surviving, and frankly, some of my doctors were just being kind when they gave me those odds. Death is not exactly cocktail-party conversation, I know, and neither is cancer, or brain surgery, or matters below the waist. But I'm not here to make polite conversation. I want to tell the truth. I'm sure you'd like to hear about how Lance Armstrong became a Great American and an Inspiration To Us All, how he won the Tour de France, the 2,290-mile road race that's considered the single most grueling sporting event on the face of the earth. You want to hear about faith and mystery, and my miraculous comeback, and how I joined towering figures like Greg LeMond and Miguel Indurain in the record book. You want to hear about my lyrical climb through the Alps and my heroic conquering of the Pyrenees, and how it felt. But the Tour was the least of the story.

Some of it is not easy to tell or comfortable to hear. I'm asking you now, at the outset, to put aside your ideas about heroes and miracles, because I'm not storybook material. This is not Disneyland, or Hollywood. I'll give you an example: I've read that I flew up the hills and mountains of France. But you don't fly up a hill. You struggle slowly and painfully up a hill, and maybe, if you work very hard, you get to the top ahead of everybody else.

Cancer is like that, too. Good, strong people get cancer, and they do all the right things to beat it, and they still die. That is the essential truth that you learn. People die. And after you learn it, all other matters seem irrelevant. They just seem small.

I don't know why I'm still alive. I can only guess. I have a tough constitution, and my profession taught me how to compete against long odds and big obstacles. I like to train hard and I like to race hard. That helped, it was a good start, but it certainly wasn't the determining factor. I can't help feeling that my survival was more a matter of blind luck.

When I was 16, I was invited to undergo testing at a place in Dallas called the Cooper Clinic, a prestigious research lab and birthplace of the aerobic exercise revolution. A doctor there measured my VO₂ max, which is a gauge of how much oxygen you can take in and use, and he says that my numbers are still the highest they've ever come across. Also, I produced less lactic acid than most people. Lactic acid is the chemical your body generates when it's winded and fatigued—it's what makes your lungs burn and your legs ache.

Basically, I can endure more physical stress than most people can, and I don't get as tired while I'm doing it. So I figure maybe that helped me live. I was lucky—I was born with an above-average capacity for breathing. But even so, I was in a desperate, sick fog much of the time.

My illness was humbling and starkly revealing, and it forced me to survey my life with an unforgiving eye. There are some shameful episodes in it: instances of meanness, unfinished tasks, weakness, and regrets. I had to ask myself, "If I live, who is it that I intend to be?" I found that I had a lot of growing to do as a man.
I won't kid you. There are two Lance Armstrongs, pre-cancer, and post. Everybody's favorite question is “How did cancer change you?” The real question is how didn't it change me? I left my house on October 2, 1996, as one person and came home another. I was a world-class athlete with a mansion on a riverbank, keys to a Porsche, and a self-made fortune in the bank. I was one of the top riders in the world and my career was moving along a perfect arc of success. I returned a different person, literally. In a way, the old me did die, and I was given a second life. Even my body is different, because during the chemotherapy I lost all the muscle I had ever built up, and when I recovered, it didn't come back in the same way.

The truth is that cancer was the best thing that ever happened to me. I don't know why I got the illness, but it did wonders for me, and I wouldn't want to walk away from it. Why would I want to change, even for a day, the most important and shaping event in my life?

People die. That truth is so disheartening that at times I can't bear to articulate it. Why should we go on, you might ask? Why don't we all just stop and lie down where we are? But there is another truth, too. People live. It’s an equal and opposing truth. People live, and in the most remarkable ways. When I was sick, I saw more beauty and triumph and truth in a single day than I ever did in a bike race—but they were human moments, not miraculous ones. I met a guy in a fraying sweatsuit who turned out to be a brilliant surgeon. I became friends with a harassed and overscheduled nurse named LaTrice, who gave me such care that it could only be the result of the deepest sympathetic affinity. I saw children with no eyelashes or eyebrows, their hair burned away by chemo, who fought with the hearts of Indurains.

I still don't completely understand it.

All I can do is tell you what happened.
What Is a Life Worth?

To compensate families of the victims of Sept. 11, the government has invented a way to measure blood and loss in cash.
A look at the wrenching calculus.

by Amanda Ripley

With reporting by Nadia Mustafa and Julie Rawe/New York and Karen Tumulty/Washington

Time, February 11, 2002

1 A train barreled over Joseph Hewins’ body on a wintry evening in 1845 in the Massachusetts Berkshires. Hewins had spent the workday shoveling snow off the tracks, only to be killed on his trip back to town when a switchman got distracted. Hewins left behind a wife and three children, who were poor even before his death. His widow sued but lost at every level. Had the train merely chopped off Hewins’ leg, the railroad would have paid. But in the perverse logic of that time, when a man died, he took his legal claims with him. And so the thinking went for most of the century, until something unheard of began to happen. The courts started to put a dollar value on a life—after death.

2 The concept of assigning a price tag to a life has always made people intensely squeamish. After all, isn’t it degrading to presume that money can make a family whole again? And what of the disparities? Is a poor man’s life worth less than a rich man’s? Over the past 100 years, U.S. courts have crafted their answers to these questions. Forensic economists testify on the value of a life every day. They can even tell you the average valuation of an injured knee (about $200,000). But until now, the public at large has not had to reckon with the process and its imperfections. Until the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11 created a small city’s worth of grieving families and the government established an unprecedented fund to compensate them, the mathematics of loss was a little-known science. Now the process is on garish display, and it is tempting to avert the eyes.

3 On the morning of Jan. 18 [2002], about 70 family members file into the rows of crimson seats at the Norwalk, Conn., city hall auditorium. They listen quietly to special master Kenneth Feinberg, whom the government has entrusted with dispersing its money to those most affected by the Sept. 11 tragedy. His first job is to persuade them to join the federal Victim Compensation Fund, the country’s largest experiment in paying mass victims and their families without placing blame. The effort is being closely watched for the precedents it will set.

4 Much has been made of the enormous charity funds raised after the attacks. Donations to those groups do funnel thousands of dollars to the victims’ families—in particular, the families of firefighters and police officers.
But overall, the nearly $2 billion in charity money is chump change compared with the cash that will flow out of government coffers. There is no limit to the federal fund, but the tab is likely to be triple the size of the charity pot. And while charity funds are doled out to a vast pool of people, including businesses hurt by the attacks, the government money will go exclusively to the injured and to families of the deceased.

Feinberg, in a black-and-white polka dot tie, speaks in short, punchy sentences and a loud voice. He has already given the speech 32 times up and down the East Coast. The main thrust: The government, for the first time ever, has agreed to write large checks to victims' families without any litigation. The checks will arrive within four months after a claim is filed—no legal fees, no agonizing 10-year lawsuit. But every award will be based on a cold calculus, much the way courts handle wrongful-death claims.

That means different sums for different families. In a TIME/CNN poll taken last month, 86 percent said all families should receive the same amount. But that's not how it's going to work.

The calculus has several steps, Feinberg explains. First, the government will estimate how much a victim would have earned over his or her lifetime had the planes never crashed. That means a broker's family will qualify for a vastly higher award than a window washer's family. To estimate this amount, each family was handed an easy-to-read chart on the way into the meeting: Find your loved one's age and income and follow your finger to the magic number. Note that the lifetime earnings have been boosted by a flat $250,000 for "pain and suffering"—noneconomic losses, they are called. Tack on an extra $50,000 in pain and suffering for a spouse and for each child. The charts, while functional, are brutal, crystallizing how readily the legal system commodifies life.

Then—and this is crucial—don't get too excited. That first number may be quite high—in the millions for many. But you must, according to the rules of the fund, subtract all the money you are getting from other sources except charities. A court settlement would not be diminished this way, but this is not a court, Feinberg repeatedly points out. Deduct life insurance, pension, Social Security death benefits, and workers' compensation. Now you have the total award the government is offering you for your loss.

The deductions have the effect of equalizing the differences in the awards. Critics have called this Feinberg's "Robin Hood strategy." For many people in the room, the number is now at or close to zero. Feinberg says he will make sure no one gets zero. "Leave it to me," he says. But nowhere will that be written into the rules when they are finalized in mid-February. Likewise, many fiancés and gay partners will be at the mercy of Feinberg's discretion in seeking awards. Before finding out exactly what they will get—and the rules are complex—families will have to agree never to sue anyone for the attacks. "Normally, that would be a difficult call," says Feinberg. "Not here. The right to sue in this case is simply not a reasonable alternative."
10 That’s because Congress has capped the liability of the airlines, the airport owners, the aircraft manufacturers, the towers’ landlord, and the city of New York. In the name of the economy, the government severely restricted the victims’ rights to sue—whether they join the fund or not. It is this lack of a viable option, even if they would not take it, that galls many families.

11 Congress created the fund as a safety net for the victims’ families, to ensure that they maintain something resembling their current standard of living—whether they get assistance from private insurance or government money. The families see it as so much more. For the traumatized, the charts are like a Rorschach test. Some view the money as a halfhearted apology for the breakdown in security and intelligence that made the attacks possible. Others can’t help seeing the award as a callous measure of their loved one’s value. Many regard it as a substitute for the millions they think they may have got in court, had the liability not been capped. When the total comes out to be underwhelming, these families take it personally. There’s a fundamental clash between the way they interpret the purpose of the fund and the way the government sees it.

12 After Feinberg speaks, he stands back and braces himself for an artillery of angry rhetorical questions. Gerry Sweeney, whose brother died in Tower 2, Floor 105, points at Feinberg and explains why $250,000 is not enough for pain and suffering in the case of her now fatherless nephew. “Have you ever seen a twelve-year-old have a nervous breakdown?” she asks. Another woman concocts an analogy to illustrate for Feinberg what it was like to talk to loved ones as they came to accept their imminent, violent deaths and to watch the towers collapse on live TV. “If your wife was brutally raped and murdered and you had to watch and listen to it happen, what would you think the right amount would be?” Finally, Maureen Halvorson, who lost her husband and her brother, speaks up from the front row in a quiet, bewildered voice. “I just can’t accept the fact that the Federal Government is saying my husband and my brother are worth nothing.” Feinberg is silent.

13 The more than 3,000 victims of the Sept. 11 attacks are frozen in snapshots, wide-smiling men and women in crisp suits and uniforms who liked to build birdhouses on weekends and play practical jokes. In the literature of grief, they have become hardworking innocents, heroes, and saints. But those they left behind are decidedly human. Some compete with others for most bereaved status; others demand an apology even when no one is listening. Some are popping pills, and others cannot leave the house. Most days, they are inconsolable. And as the rest of the country begins to ease back into normalcy, these families stand, indignant, in the way.

14 Already, some Americans have lost patience with them. “My tax money should not be given to someone with a $750,000 mortgage to pay who needs a set of fresh, matching towels in her bathroom every season,” one person wrote anonymously to the Department of Justice’s Web page on victim compensation. “I’m shocked and appalled and very disappointed,” wrote
a Florida resident, "that some individuals are living in such a rare and well-gilded ivory tower that they feel $250,000 is not sufficient compensation. Most of us, the working people of America, make $20,000 to $40,000 per year. Where do these wealthy, spoiled, greedy folks in New York get off, pretending that what happened to them was so uniquely horrible? I'm over it. Yeah, it was unique. Yeah, it was horrible. Yeah, I sent money to help. And after reading about them suing for more money, I begin to regret it."

15 It's true that some families' behavior has been less than dignified. The divorced parents of a woman killed in the Pentagon, who are eligible for money because their daughter left no dependents, have filed competing claims. Lawyers are now involved. Says her father: "I guarantee she loved her daddy as much as she loved her mom. I feel that I'm entitled to something."

16 And it's also a fact that these families will get more money from charities and the government combined than anyone has so far received after the Oklahoma City bombing or the 1998 bombing of the Nairobi embassy. For that matter, if these victims had been killed in a drive-by shooting, they probably would not have received more than a few thousand dollars from state victim-compensation funds.

17 That fact is not lost on the public, particularly people whose relatives have died in everyday tragedies. At the *Wichita Eagle* in Kansas, editorial-page director Phil Brownlee has received calls and letters from locals disgusted by the families' complaints, and he agrees. "It's just frustrating that the goodwill demonstrated by the government seems to be deteriorating," he says. "Now you've got families who are upset with what most Americans deem to be generous contributions. It's the loss of the spirit of Sept. 11, the souring of that sense of solidarity."

18 But it may not be fair to compare Sept. 11 with a street crime or even Oklahoma City. After all, these recent attacks involved an orchestrated, simultaneous security breach on four airplanes, carried out by 19 men who had been living and training on our soil. A better comparison might be past international terrorist attacks and plane crashes. Those that have been resolved—and that's a major distinction—do show higher payouts than the average amount likely to come out of the Sept. 11 federal fund.

19 In 25 major aviation accidents between 1970 and 1984, the average compensation for victims who went to trial was $1 million in current dollars, according to a Rand Corp. analysis. Average compensation for cases settled without a lawsuit was $415,000. The biggest aviation payout in history followed the crash of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1988. Settlements ranged all over the spectrum, with a couple dozen exceeding $10 million, according to Manhattan attorney Lee Kreindler, who acted as lead counsel. Dividing the total $500 million payout over the 270 victims yields an average award of $1.85 million. However, the families had to hand about a third of their awards to their lawyers, and they waited seven to eight years to see any money. And the families of the six people killed in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing are still waiting for their day in civil court.
In the end, most families will probably choose the fund over litigation. The Lockerbie millions are simply not a realistic possibility. It is always extremely difficult to sue the government. And the liability for the Sept. 11 attacks was capped by Congress at about $1.5 billion per plane. So while the families of those killed in the Pennsylvania and Pentagon crashes may have enough to go around, there are far too many victims in New York. "The court model works perfectly when you don't have $50 billion in damages or 3,000 deaths," says Leo Boyle, a Boston lawyer and president of the Association of Trial Lawyers of America, which supports the fund option and has lined up more than 2,000 attorneys to offer free help navigating its rules. Even without the caps, Boyle insists, victims could not have extracted more money by putting United and American Airlines through bankruptcy. So far, only a handful of suits have been filed.

In any event, there was no talking Congress out of the liability caps when it drafted the airline-bailout package 10 days after the attacks. The airlines could not fly without insurance, and their coverage was far short of what it would take to pay the damages. Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan privately told congressional leaders that getting the planes up again was the single biggest "multiplier" that could revive the economy on every level. So the Democrats, who usually balk at limiting the ability to sue, accepted the idea of an airline bailout—as long as it came with a mechanism to compensate victims. Oklahoma Senator Don Nickles, the No. 2 Republican in the Senate and a longtime proponent of tort reform, pushed hard to limit how much the victims' families could claim, but he did not prevail.

But once the interim rules were drawn up by Feinberg's office—in conjunction with the Department of Justice and the Office of Management and Budget—there were some surprises. In particular, the figures for pain and suffering astonished some who had backed the fund. "The numbers are low by any measure," says Boyle. Feinberg says he chose the $250,000 figure because that's how much beneficiaries receive from the Federal Government when firefighters and police die on the job. The additional $50,000 for the spouse and each child is, he admits, "just some rough approximation of what I thought was fair." He calls the fund "rough justice."

The American Tort Reform Association, backed mostly by Republicans, has been lobbying since 1986 to limit noneconomic damages in some suits to $250,000. John Ashcroft, head of the Justice Department, pushed for such a cap on punitive damages when he was a senator. But Feinberg, a Democrat, insists he was not pressured by the administration to keep the numbers low.

No matter how many times tearful widows accuse him of protecting the airlines, Feinberg does not blush. A lawyer with decades of experience in the messy art of compromise (Feinberg was special master for the $180 million distributed to veterans exposed to Agent Orange), he is accustomed to rage. "On Tuesday I get whacked for this or that in New Jersey. The next day it's New York. It goes with the job." But he rejects the theory that greed is a
factor. “People have had a loved one wrenched from them suddenly, without warning, and we are only five months beyond that disaster. It was nearly yesterday. And they are desperately seeking, from what I’ve seen, to place as much of a value on that lost loved one as they can. So here is where they seek to amplify the value of that memory. They do it by saying we want more, as a validation of the loss. That’s not greed. That’s human nature.”

25 Susan and Harvey Blomberg of Fairfield County, Conn., have been to three meetings on the victim-compensation fund, even though, as parents of a victim who has left a wife and kids behind, they are not in line for compensation. The rules give preference to the victim’s spouse and children. But the Blombergs come to these meetings to be part of something, to be counted. And they linger after everyone else has left. “My daughter-in-law was upset when we went to the meetings,” Susan says. “She said, ‘It’s not really about you. It’s about the widows and children.’ And I said, ‘I want more information.’ You can’t compare grief, because nobody can get inside you. But I feel like an orphan. When they did this formula, why didn’t they consider the parents? My daughter-in-law was married for five years. We had Jonathan for 33 years.”

26 “It’s a horrible thing that this is where our energies need to be pulled,” says Cheri Sparacio, 37, the widow of Thomas Sparacio, a currency trader at Euro Brokers who died in Tower 2. In their modest house in Staten Island, littered with the toys of her twin two-year-olds, she explains why she sees the estimated $138,000 she would get from the fund as a cheap bribe. “The government is not taking any responsibility for what it’s done. This was just one screw-up after another.” She is also worried about her financial stability; in less than a month, she will have their third child. Thomas was the primary wage earner, although Cheri worked as a part-time school psychologist until Sept. 11. She doesn’t see how she can go back to work with an infant and two toddlers unless she hires full-time help. “Please, come step into my shoes for a minute,” she says, her eyes flat and unblinking. “I am not looking to go to Tahiti.”

27 But uptown in the apartment where Samuel Fields once lived, the fund acts like a quiet equalizer, a way for the government to guarantee that victims with less insurance emerge with basic support. Fields was a security guard for six years in Tower 1. He made $22,000 a year and lived with his family in a housing project in Harlem. On Sept. 11, he helped people evacuate the building and then went back inside to help some more. Fields never came home. Next month his widow Angela will give birth to their fifth child. Because Fields made a small salary, his family’s preliminary award is less than Sparacio’s. But his family’s deductions are also smaller. In the end, Angela’s estimated $444,010 award will probably be three times the size of Cheri’s.

28 In valuing different lives differently—the first part of the equation—the fund follows common legal practice. Courts always grant money on the basis of a person’s earning power in life. That’s because the courts are not attempting to
replace “souls,” says Philip Bobbitt, a law professor at the University of Texas who has written about the allocation of scarce resources in times of tragedy. “We’re not trying to make you psychologically whole. Where we can calculate the loss is in economic loss.” The Feinberg plan differs from legal norms in deducting the value of life insurance and pensions. Also, it allows no flexibility in determining noneconomic damages. In court, pain and suffering would be weighed individually.

Money aside, a lawsuit can be an investigative device like no other, forcing answers about what led to a death. Some Sept. 11 families say they might file suit for that reason alone, even if they never get a dime. And for other families, there is enormous value in no lawsuits at all. David Gordenstein lost his wife, Lisa Fenn Gordenstein, on American Flight 11. “Am I sad? I’ve had my heart torn out,” he says. But he would rather devote his life to raising his two young daughters than pursuing a lawsuit. He will probably file a claim with the federal fund, which he acknowledges is not perfect. “I am proud of what my country tried to do. I think the intention is noble.”

The night before Lisa died, she slipped a clipping under the door of David’s home office, something she often did. It was a saying from theologian Charles Swindoll that read, “Attitude, to me, is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do . . . It will make or break a company, a church, a home.” David read it at her memorial. And while he jokes that it’s kind of clichéd—“typical Lisa”—he says he thinks its message might help carry his family through this.
Human Life Value Calculator

How much do I need?

Human life value calculator

The human life value calculator has been designed to help you assess your financial value to those you love by estimating the future financial contributions you will make to your family... or, more starkly, the financial loss that your family would incur if you were to die today. For the purposes of this calculator, a human life only has economic value in its relation to other lives, specifically a spouse or dependent children. Therefore, if you have neither, the calculator will not generate a result.

Please note: this calculator will provide only a rough sense of your human life value, which can be a factor in determining the amount of insurance you should have in your financial portfolio. Typically, the amount of life insurance someone needs is less than his or her human life value due to the availability of other sources of income (e.g., existing life insurance coverage, Social Security benefits, etc.). For an analysis of your life insurance needs, please visit the Life Insurance Needs Calculator or contact a professional agent or advisor in your area.

This calculator projects typical lifetime income for someone with the characteristics you provide in the input section, less taxes and expenditures devoted to your own consumption, plus any fringe benefits your family receives from your employer, such as health insurance, and the services you provide around the house. The resulting estimate is an approximate measure of your net financial contribution to your family - your human life value.

This human life value calculator should not be viewed as a comprehensive assessment. For example, you will notice that it does not account for the specific occupation and education of you or your spouse. Also, to simplify your responses, only general information is sought regarding your non-wage income, which impacts both your consumption and your income taxes. Furthermore, the dollar value of your fringe benefits is assumed to be equal to the average for someone of your income and family situation. Nevertheless, we believe that, given the limited information the calculator is using, it is the best estimate available. Click here for more information on the assumptions used to generate these estimates.

Enter only numbers or letters, no commas or dollar signs.

1. Your age at nearest birthday:
   
   20

2. Sex:
   
   Female

3. Your planned retirement age (e.g., 65):
   
   65

4. Major occupation category:

   1. Executive, Administrative, and Managerial
      (e.g., Chief Executives, Managers, Accountants, Marketers, Buyers)
   2. Professional Specialty
      (e.g., Engineers, Scientists, Teachers, Lawyers, Doctors, Nurses, Artists)
   3. Technicians, Computer Programmers, and Related Support
      (e.g., Electrical, Mechanical and Health Technicians)
4. Sales
   - (e.g., Real Estate, Insurance, Retail and Personal Services)
5. Administrative Support, Including Clerical Support
6. Service and Public Safety
   - (e.g., Food, Health and Cleaning Services, Police, Firefighters, and Security)
7. Farming, Forestry, Fishing
8. Craft, Repair, Skilled Laborers
   - (e.g., Mechanics, Construction Workers, Textile and Food Production, Inspectors)
9. Operators, Fabricators, Laborers
   - (e.g., Machine Operators, Motor Vehicle Operators, Assembler, Rail Transportation)

5. Your annual wage earnings before taxes:
   18000

6. Does your employer provide fringe benefits?
   Yes

7. Do you have a spouse?
   No
   If yes, then:
   Age of spouse:
   Is spouse employed?
   No
   Spouse’s planned retirement age (e.g., 65):
   Spouse’s annual wage earnings before taxes:

8. Annual non-wage earnings (e.g., investment or rental income)
   0

9. Ages of children under 23:
   - 2
   - 3
   - 4
   - 5
   - 6
   - 7
   - 8
   - 9

Analysis [ ] Clear Form [ ]

Return to calculator input
Back to Top
Your estimated human life value - the value today of your future contributions to your household - $661,219 or about 37 times your current annual income. If you were to die today, this amount is roughly what your family would need to maintain the same standard of living they will enjoy over the course of your anticipated working life. The graphs below provide a step-by-step overview of how your approximate human life value has been estimated.

**Your future gross contributions to your family**

![Graph showing gross contributions to family]

- **Earnings**
- **Fringe**
- **Services**

**Total** $1,041,872

This graph shows projections of your annual earnings, fringe benefits, and household services for each future year. These projections were based on the information you provided, along with data from the U.S. Census, the professional economics literature, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and various research universities.

**Your future net contributions to your family**

![Graph showing net contributions to family]

- **Net Contribution**
- **Consumption**
- **Taxes**

**Total** $1,041,872

This graph shows projections of your consumption and income taxes. They were derived using information from the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Internal Revenue Service. When your consumption and taxes are subtracted from the sum total of your earnings, fringe benefits, and services, the result is the net financial contribution you are likely to make to your family, in each and every year. This net contribution is also shown in the graph.

**Your estimated human life value**

![Graph showing human life value]

- **Net Contribution**

The Present Value of Your Human Life Value = $661,219

This final graph relates the net contributions illustrated in the graph above. They comprise your human life value. The dollar value listed above is the amount of money that would need to be invested today in a risk-free investment to replace this human life value in the event of your death. Said another way, it is the amount necessary today to provide the same standard of living to your family that you would have provided had you lived.
The Value of Life

Reading selections for this module:

The assignment sequence you’re about to begin will ask you to read several different texts, each of which addresses the issue of how life is valued. As you will see, the texts provide very different ways of thinking about how we can, do, and should value life.

Reading Rhetorically

Prereading

Activity 1

Getting Ready to Read

Before you read what others say about the value of life, take a few minutes to respond in writing to the following quickwrite prompt:

What does being alive mean to you? How do you assign value to life? What makes life challenging? What makes it worth living? Describe a few examples that help to show your thinking about how people should value life.

Activity 2

Introducing Key Concepts

This activity will help you build your understanding of the many meanings suggested by the concept of “life.” Use the model below to explore the ways in which society defines “life” in various contexts.
Activity 2
(Continued)

Concept: Life

Example sentence:

Synonyms:

Contexts:

Examples:

Non-examples:

Text 1—Hamlet’s Soliloquy

Activity 3

Surveying the Text

The first text you will read is the famous “To be, or not to be” speech from Shakespeare’s play Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, which was published in 1604 under the title The Tragical Historie of Hamlet, Prince of Denmarke. That speech is a soliloquy, a convention used by playwrights to allow the audience to hear the thoughts of a character. Take a few moments to look over the text, and then answer the following questions:

• What prior experiences have you had reading plays?
• What did you notice about the page format and annotations?
• What did you notice about the text structure?

Activity 4

Making Predictions and Asking Questions

When approaching a new text, you should always try to draw on your prior experiences to help you predict what the text might be about. The following questions will help you to do so:

• What is a tragedy? What themes and outcomes would you expect to find in a tragedy?
• What do you know about the language in plays written by Shakespeare? What have you done in the past to help yourself read Shakespeare effectively?
• The soliloquy here begins with a famous quotation: “To be, or not to be—that is the question.” What do you think is “the question” Hamlet is asking? How do you think he might answer it?
Introducing Key Vocabulary

Shakespeare’s texts are often difficult because he uses words that are no longer in frequent use, even though they were common when he wrote his plays. Several words in the soliloquy fit into this category. You will see in the text that some words are marked with an asterisk (*); a definition or synonym is provided to the right of the line for those words.

Polar Opposites

An important rhetorical device Shakespeare uses in Hamlet’s soliloquy is antithesis, or a balance of opposites. Hamlet explores a series of oppositional relationships in his speech, beginning with the question of “to be, or not to be.” For this vocabulary activity, you will explore some of these antithetical relationships by brainstorming antonyms for the terms listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Antonym</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. oppression</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. action</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. endurance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. mystery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. life</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Word Families

List as many words as possible that are related to the following five concepts from Hamlet’s soliloquy: action, thought, suffering, mortality, and fear. You may include synonyms directly from the text along with any other words you believe are related to the concept. Word families are not simply lists of synonyms; they may include any sets of words that frequently appear together. For example, “brackish” and “water” are part of the same word family.

Example:

Resolution: end (line 5), consummation (line 8), will (line 25), decision, outcome, and result

1. action:
2. thought:
3. suffering:
4. mortality:
5. fear:
Activity 6

First Reading

Read the soliloquy from *Hamlet*. Although it is quite short, it packs much meaning into its 33 lines. You may need to read it more than once before you feel you have a good grasp on the ideas it contains.

Background

At this point in the play, Hamlet feels that he is in a crisis. His father died a few months earlier under mysterious circumstances. Hamlet discovers that his father was secretly murdered—by Hamlet’s uncle, Claudius. Making things even worse, Claudius then marries Hamlet’s mother. Hamlet does not know what to do about this knowledge. He wonders whether he can trust anyone or if perhaps he is going crazy.

As you first read the text, focus on what you see as the “big picture” Hamlet describes. Based on this first reading, would you say that Hamlet is an optimist or a pessimist? What are your reasons for thinking so?

Activity 7

Rereading the Text and Looking Closely at Language

Strategic Marking of the Text

Because this series of texts focuses on the way people value life, you will now need to take a second look at the soliloquy. This time, read the text with a yellow highlighter or colored pencil (or devise some other way of marking the text in a unique and easily recognizable way), marking the places in the text where Hamlet describes what it means to be alive.

Example: In lines two and three, Hamlet describes life as “the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,” so you could highlight that phrase as an example of what Hamlet thinks it means “to be.”

Characterizing the Text

Take a look at the parts of the soliloquy you have highlighted and compare them with a classmate’s markings. Find a few examples that you both have marked and mark the examples with a “+” or “−” to indicate whether the examples show a positive (+) outlook on life or a negative (−) one. For the example above—“the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune”—you would mark a “−” because it compares being alive to being under attack. After you have marked several such examples, reflect on the question asked earlier: At this moment, does it seem as if Hamlet is an optimist or a pessimist?

Paraphrasing the Text

Continuing to work with your partner, choose three of your samples and paraphrase them. “Paraphrasing” means putting the ideas of
another writer into your own words. Again using the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" example, a paraphrase might sound something like this: "Hamlet compares being alive to having fate shoot arrows at him." As you paraphrase, pay attention to the style used by Shakespeare to convey his ideas. What is the difference between having Hamlet say that life is like "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" and having him just say, "Life isn’t very pleasant"? What are the effects of Shakespeare’s stylistic choices as a writer?

**Postreading**

**Activity 8**

**Thinking Critically**

We identified the genre earlier as a drama, but more specifically, this is a soliloquy. As noted earlier, a soliloquy is a dramatic convention that allows a character to speak aloud his or her thoughts. From your reading of the soliloquy, answer the following questions:

- Does the soliloquy form seem to favor the expression of emotion (pathos) or logic (logos)? Explain why you think so.
- Does Hamlet’s soliloquy use emotion (pathos) to create a specific effect on the reader? If so, describe how emotion is used.
- Does Hamlet’s soliloquy use logic (logos) to create a specific effect on the reader? If so, describe how the logic is used.
- When Hamlet speaks his soliloquy, he is in crisis. How do his circumstances position Hamlet to speak with authority (ethos) about the value of life? Does Hamlet seem to be speaking about his life in particular or about the quality of life in general?
- As careful readers, we are of course aware that it is not really Hamlet speaking, but a character created by Shakespeare. Does Shakespeare seem like someone whose opinions and attitudes are worth considering? Why?

**Activity 9**

**Charting Multiple Texts**

Take a look at the chart constructed for this assignment. It is a "graphic organizer"—a fancy name for something that helps you keep track of various pieces of information and the relationships among those pieces. Because the chart is rather small and you will be doing a lot of writing on it, you might want to get a larger piece of paper and create your own chart. The chart will prove useful in the writing assignment you will complete at the end of this module.

**Directions:** As you look down the side of the chart, you will see that it asks you for information about the different texts you will be reading in this assignment:

- Title
- Author
- Genre
The title and author are self-explanatory. “Genre” means “type,” so you are asked to describe the type of writing. For this first text, you would put “Drama” or “Play” as the genre.

Across the top of the chart are the ideas you will be tracking as you read the texts in this module. They are presented in the form of questions:

- What is the text’s big issue?
  - This asks you to identify the “main idea” of the text.

- What claim does the text make?
  - This asks you to identify the writer’s perspective on the main idea.

- What are examples or quotes from the text?
  - This is where you would put examples given by the writer to help the reader understand his or her claim. The quotes and paraphrases you worked on earlier will fit well here. Be sure to include page or line numbers (or both) to identify where you found the quote or idea.

- What do you think about the text’s claim?
  - In this box, you will explain your response to the text’s claim, including to what extent (if any) you agree with it.

- What are your examples?
  - Give a few examples from your own experiences that help explain your response to the text’s claim.

- How does this text connect to other texts?
  - If you see a similarity to another text, make note of it here. Connections can be made even among texts that have very different claims.

Take a few moments to fill in the chart for Hamlet’s soliloquy. The final box on making connections may be left blank for the moment.
Text 2—It's Not About the Bike

Prereading

Activity 10

Surveying the Text

The second text is an excerpt from It's Not About the Bike: My Journey Back to Life by Lance Armstrong with Sally Jenkins. The excerpt you will read is from the book’s opening chapter. Prior to reading, try to answer the questions below. They are designed to help you activate your schema, which is a technical term that means you generate some prior knowledge so you will be ready to read and comprehend more actively.

- What do you know about Lance Armstrong? If you do not know anything about him, try doing a quick Internet search and see what comes up.
- What is the significance of the fact that the book was written by Armstrong with Sally Jenkins?
- What kind of text—what genre—do you think this book is?

Activity 11

Making Predictions and Asking Questions

The following questions will help you make specific predictions about the content of Armstrong’s text:

- What topics do you think Armstrong might talk about that are related to the issue of how society values life?
- Do you think Armstrong’s claim about the value of life will agree with Hamlet’s or not?

Activity 12

Introducing Key Vocabulary

Although the excerpt from Armstrong’s autobiography is generally an easy, straightforward text to read, there are a few vocabulary words you might want to review prior to reading. When you run into those words during your reading of the text, note the context of each word and write a “best guess” synonym for it. Your teacher may want you to compare your work with your classmates.

- expire
- poignant
- demise
- cadence
- marbled
- acrid
- puckered
- catheter
Activity 12
(Continued)
• constitution
• articulate
Which sets or pairs of words are related to each other? Which words refer to death? Which words refer to the body? Do you think you might encounter additional word families in this excerpt? Which ones?

Reading

Activity 13
First Reading
Read the text by Armstrong. As you read, pay attention to the way Armstrong talks about the value of life. As you did with Hamlet, try to determine whether Armstrong appears to be generally pessimistic or optimistic in this passage. In addition, answer this question: Does Armstrong also present an argument about the value of death?

Activity 14
Rereading the Text and Looking Closely at Language
Strategic Marking of the Text
First Highlighting: As you did with the Shakespeare text, you will mark Armstrong’s text. This time, use an orange-colored highlighter or colored pencil (or devise some other method of marking the text differently than you marked the soliloquy). Highlight the sentences, phrases, or words Armstrong uses to describe what he thinks it means to be alive.

Characterizing the Text
Once you have highlighted Armstrong’s text, compare what you have selected to highlight with the choices a classmate has made. Then, working with your partner, mark some of the commonly highlighted parts with a “+” or “−” sign to indicate whether each quote shows a generally positive or negative outlook on life. Discussing the results with your partner, decide how you would answer this question about Armstrong’s outlook on life: Is he an optimist or a pessimist?

Strategic Marking of the Text
Second Highlighting: Go through the text once more, this time with a yellow highlighter. Imagine that you are reading Armstrong’s text from Hamlet’s perspective. Highlight any passages that Hamlet would find particularly interesting or compelling. Some of these may be the same words you have already highlighted, while others will be new.

Connecting the Texts—The Mock Interview
Armstrong and Hamlet, in their respective texts, provide quite different perspectives on the meaning and value of life. Working with your partner, envision a scenario in which Hamlet somehow would have the opportunity to interview Armstrong and vice versa. One of you should write out a series of at least five questions that Hamlet would ask Armstrong, while the other writes five questions for Armstrong to ask Hamlet.
Activity 14 (Continued)

When the questions are finished, take on the personas of these two and conduct the interviews. Be sure to give answers that are in keeping with the points of view provided in the two texts. After conducting the mock interviews, discuss the relative viewpoints of the characters. How well would they get along with one another? How would each respond to the arguments made by the other?

Here are some sample interview questions:
- How do you feel you have been treated by other people?
- Are you afraid of death?
- Are there any benefits to suffering?
- How do you approach challenges?

Postreading

Activity 15

Thinking Critically

Armstrong’s text is an autobiography. As with the soliloquy we examined earlier, the form of this writing has an effect on how it is read and understood. The questions below will help you assess Armstrong’s text.

- An autobiography is a form of nonfiction—a text that tells the "truth." Do you think Armstrong is being truthful in his account of his life? Explain your reasoning.
- Armstrong’s autobiography is written “with” Sally Jenkins. What role do you think Jenkins played in the writing of the text? How does her participation in the creation of the text influence your interpretation of Armstrong’s story? In other words, how does the combination of Armstrong and Jenkins as authors affect the “ethos” of the text?
- Do you think Armstrong’s story has an impact on the reader because of its use of logic (logos) or emotion (pathos) or both?
- Unlike Hamlet, Armstrong is not in the midst of his crisis when he writes his story; instead, he writes about his experiences in hindsight. Does that have an impact on Armstrong’s ability to make his ideas and story compelling to the reader? Explain your reasoning.

Activity 16

Charting Multiple Texts

Make an entry in your chart for the Armstrong text. Fill it out as you did with the soliloquy. When you reach the entry for “How does this text connect to other texts?”, briefly describe the ways in which Armstrong responds to or challenges the assertions Shakespeare makes in his soliloquy for Hamlet.
Prereading

Activity 17

Surveying the Text

The article "What Is a Life Worth?" comes from the February 12, 2002, issue of Time magazine. Take a look at its form and length. How much time do you think it will take to read this piece? Have you read anything from Time magazine? What do you know about that publication? What kinds of articles are commonly included in it? What types of people do you think compose the magazine’s primary readership?

Activity 18

Making Predictions and Asking Questions

This article includes the following subtitle: "To compensate families of the victims of Sept. 11, the government has invented a way to measure blood and loss in cash. A look at the wrenching calculus."

- What predictions can you make about the article’s content from this subtitle?
- What connections do you think you might see between this article and the previous two texts you have read?
- The first two texts took first-person perspectives on the subject. Do you anticipate that this article will continue in that vein, or will it be different? Why do you think so?

Activity 19

Introducing Key Vocabulary

Below, you will find three groupings of vocabulary words taken from "What Is a Life Worth?" The first group consists of words related to the legal and financial aspects of the article. The second list contains terms that convey information with particular emotional connotations. The final set of words is made up of terms that are used to describe the workings of the governmental plan to compensate 9/11 family victims. Working alone or with a partner, look over each list of words and provide a brief definition for the words you do not know well. Pay particular attention to the ways in which the words connect to one another (e.g., people litigate, or sue, because they want somebody to compensate them for a loss).

Financial and legal terms
- compensate
- litigation
- commodify
- valuation
- discretion
Activity 19 (Continued)
- liability
- beneficiary
- tort
- allocation
- disparity

Emotion-laden words
- squeamish
- garish
- gall
- traumatize
- callous
- inconsolable
- indignant
- balk
- deteriorate

Descriptive terms
- rhetorical
- Rorschach test
- artillery
- analogy
- solidarity
- orchestrated
- concoct
- mechanism

Reading

Activity 20
First Reading
As you read "What Is a Life Worth?" for the first time, look for the main issues and the various stances people take in response to those issues. Be sure to also look for connections to the idea of valuing life and to what was previously said about valuing life by Shakespeare and Armstrong.

How is "life" defined in this text? For example, does "life" refer to a human body, a soul, human experience, existence, or quality of life? Does this definition include a person's personal life and professional or working life?

Activity 21
Rereading the Text
Strategic Marking of the Text
Choose two highlighter or pencil colors and revisit the text of the article on 9/11. The two colors will be used to mark two different aspects of the article. With the first color, highlight the words, phrases, and sentences from the article that describe valuing life in legal and
Activity 21 (Continued)

financial terms. With the second color, highlight the words, phrases, and sentences that describe valuing life in human and emotional terms.

Summarizing the Text
Using the sections you highlighted in the previous step, write a summary of the article’s descriptions of how life is valued and people’s responses to that valuing of life. Your summary should include only the most important ideas and must be limited to six sentences. If your teacher allows, you may want to work on this summary with a partner.

Connecting the Texts
With a partner, read the summary you wrote in the previous step. One of you should read the summary from the perspective of Hamlet; the other should take on the persona of Armstrong. Discuss with your partner how each would probably react to the way that “What Is a Life Worth?” describes the value of life.

• Would Hamlet agree with any of the ideas presented in the article? If so, which ones?
• Would Armstrong agree with any of the ideas in the article? If so, which ones?
• Would Armstrong and Hamlet be in agreement at all in the way they might interpret this article’s ideas? If so, how?

Postreading

Activity 22

Thinking Critically
The previous two texts (the soliloquy and the autobiographical excerpt) both provide very personal approaches to the idea of valuing life. The current text, though, is an article from a respected national news magazine. The following questions will help you work through some of the implications of the text’s structure and features on the interpretation and understanding of the text:

• Most news articles such as “What Is a Life Worth?” try to take an objective, unbiased approach. Would you agree that this text is unbiased, or do you think it favors one perspective? Explain your answer.
• What kinds of evidence does Ripley, the author of the article, use to get across the key ideas and issues associated with the compensation of 9/11 victims and their families? Are any specific types of evidence more compelling to you as a reader? Less compelling?
• How accurate do you think the information in the article is? In other words, do you think Time magazine and Ripley are to be trusted? Why or why not?
• Does the article use logic, emotion, or both to make an impact on the reader? If so, describe how. Compare that use to the way logic and emotion are used by Shakespeare, Armstrong, or both.
Charting Multiple Texts
Make a third entry on your chart for "What Is a Life Worth?" Feel free to use the highlighting, summarizing, connections, and critical thinking work you did previously as a way to fill out the chart.

Text 4—"Human Life Value Calculator"

Prereading

Surveying the Text
This text comes from an Internet resource called the "Life and Health Insurance Foundation for Education." Viewing the actual Web site is certainly preferable to looking at the printed text; the Web site's human life value calculator is available for examination at http://www.life-line.org/life_how_human.html.

- If your classroom has computer access, visit the Web site. Click around and look at the types of information available on the site as well as information about the organization that publishes the site. What appears to be the purpose of the site? How is the site organized?
- If you do not have Internet access, simply scan the text and take inventory of its attributes. What type of text does it appear to be? What are the features of the text, including the presence of such things as headings and graphs?
- This text comes from an Internet site whose domain name ends in "org" instead of the more common "com." Do you know what this ending to the site's address signifies?

Making Predictions and Asking Questions
This text is quite different from the previous three texts. It is not personal or narrative, as the first two texts were, nor is it an informative text designed for a general audience. Instead, as you probably noticed when surveying the text, it is an interactive site, asking the reader to provide data to input and generating specific information based on the particular data provided by the user. The Web-based pages are called the "Human Life Value Calculator." Answer the following questions on the basis of what you know so far before you begin to read:

- What do you think might be the purpose of a text like this?
- Who might use this text?
- Since this text claims to calculate human life value, do you anticipate that this will have the most connections to Hamlet's soliloquy, Armstrong's autobiography, or Ripley's Time article? Why?
Introducing Key Vocabulary

The vocabulary terms listed below come from the Web site text. Many of these terms are similar to those in the list of legal and financial terms from "What Is a Life Worth?" In the same way that finding connections among ideas in different texts helps us to better understand those ideas, finding connections among vocabulary words helps us to better understand those words. As you find definitions for the terms below, try to include a similar term from the previous vocabulary lists.

- assess
- incur
- expenditure
- consumption
- fringe benefits
- contribution

Reading

First Reading

Read through the text, noting the way that a life's value is determined by the Human Life Value Calculator. Pay particular attention to the data input, which reflects a twenty-year-old single mother working in a service industry. If you have access to the Web site itself, you can choose a variety of data inputs to see how the results vary. Try providing different age, gender, occupation, and income information, and then examine the effect on the results. As you make sense of the calculator and its workings, make note of any connections you see to the previous texts we have read.

Rereading the Text

Strategic Marking of the Text

This activity is a variation on the kind of highlighting you did with the Time magazine article. Once again, you will be using two colors to mark the text for two different aspects. This time, however, you will be using the highlighter colors to indicate your own responses to the ideas within the text. With one color, highlight the parts of the text with which you find yourself in agreement. Use the other color to highlight the parts of the text that you either disagree with or that raise questions for you.

Responding to the Text

Look over the highlighting you did in the previous step. Write a brief response—no more than eight sentences—to the Human Life Value Calculator Web site. The response should describe what the Web site asserts about human life’s value and your reactions to those assertions. Remember, your response doesn’t have to be in complete agreement or disagreement with the text; you might agree with some aspects and disagree with others.
Thinking Critically

- The Web site text you have been studying differs structurally (that is, in the way it is put together) from the prior texts. Make a list of several of the differences between this text and the others.
- Unlike the other texts, the Human Life Value Calculator has no single identified author. Does the lack of a named author affect your level of belief in the text’s ideas and purpose? How can you find out more about the text and whose interests it represents?
- Did this text produce in you an emotional response of any sort? If so, briefly describe it.
- Consider the charts that the calculator produces. How well do you understand the meaning of these charts? How do the three charts differ? Does the use of all of the numbers within the charts seem to make a logical argument about the value of life?

Charting Multiple Texts

As you did with the previous texts, fill out a chart entry for the Web site. To facilitate this task, you may refer, as needed, to the highlighting you have done, your responses, and the questions (above) you just answered.

Connecting Reading and Writing

Writing to Learn

Many of the activities you have completed so far have involved writing. These kinds of informal writing assignments are part of a process called “writing to learn.” You have been using writing, in essence, as a way for you to understand and interpret the texts you have been reading. Such informal writing is also a useful tool for helping you get ready to do more formal writing, as with the writing assignment you’ll find below. To help you construct a claim for your essay as you work on this assignment, be sure to revisit the informal writing you have done. The chart, in particular, will help you to synthesize information for your paper.

Using the Words of Others

When you write anything in response to a text you have read, you will have to describe for your reader what the original text says. This can be done through direct quotations (saying precisely what the original author said), paraphrasing (providing a specific idea from the text,
Activity 32 (Continued)

but putting it in your own words), and summarizing (providing the primary ideas from the text in a generalized form). The activities you have already completed have asked you to find quotations, provide paraphrases, and write summaries, so you should be well prepared for using the words of Shakespeare, Armstrong, Ripley, and the makers of the human life value calculator within your formal essay.

When you use any method for representing the ideas from another text in your own writing, you must provide a citation. Your teacher will probably already have described for you the type of citation you need to use for this class, so be sure to follow those instructions carefully. Remember, even when you are summarizing and paraphrasing, you still must attribute the ideas to the original writer.

Writing Rhetorically

Prewriting

Activity 33

Reading the Assignment

As you read the assignment below, make note of the type of writing you are required to complete, the sources you may need to describe and discuss in your writing, and the audience for your writing.

Writing Assignment

So far in this assignment sequence, we have heard a number of different voices giving insights into the value of life. Hamlet’s soliloquy offers an emotional, metaphor-laden glimpse into the thinking of a young man contemplating suicide. Lance Armstrong’s autobiography uses storytelling from a first-person perspective to get across how the famed cyclist thinks about life. Amanda Ripley’s article from Time magazine provides insight into the problems involved in translating the concept of valuing life from abstract terms into actual dollars and cents. The Human Life Value Calculator establishes specific criteria for assigning monetary value to a person’s life.

You might not fully agree or disagree with any of the texts’ essential claims about the value of life. This makes your voice an important contribution to this discussion about how we should value human life. Where do your ideas fit into the terrain mapped by the other texts we have read? Is it right to assign dollar values to a person’s life? Do suffering and illness impact how we should value life? Assume that the audience for your piece consists of intelligent citizens interested in this issue—the same types of people, for instance, who would read Time magazine.