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I use paired readings to give the students experience with similar passages but with different purposes. The SAT uses this format, so it gives the students some confidence in what they will need to do on the test, but it is also an effective method of getting students to dissect an author's rhetorical choices. I generally find material in newspapers or from magazines, and I start with something fairly high interest and not too difficult. One of the first times they see pairings is when we are reading *The Things They Carried*, a core book for all 11th graders at my school. We spend much time reading and talking about the context of the late 1960's and early 1970's. When we cover the anti-war movement, I start by handing out paired song lyrics. Students need to determine the audience and purpose for each song, but in order to do this, they also need to understand the contextual references, which opens up many more discussions about the history and events of the times. As examples, "Born in the USA" by Bruce Springsteen and "Fortunate Son" by CCR open up discussions on class and race. "Universal Soldier" by Buffy Sainte-Marie and "Masters of War" by Bob Dylan require students to consider who is responsible for war.

The SAT asks students to look at the relationship between paired passages, the purpose of each passage, and the author's viewpoint on the topic of a passage as well as the importance of various rhetorical details in each passage. I can get at all of this with these lyrics and open up a depth of understanding about the historical and social context of the novel.

Another time when we focus on paired passages and the skills required to read inferentially and to synthesize information is during our Media Unit. As part of this, the students look at the impact of technology on their lives and read various articles from magazines or newspapers. I am a big proponent of teaching annotation to all students. I call it active reading. The students will read each piece separately, answering questions about both content and technique, but then I pair articles, asking the kids to take a look at the material in relation to what others are saying on the same topic. Initially, I always provide questions and continue to do so for a class that needs them, but I find most students can become independent at this skill. When we discuss the readings, I can refocus or expand on something that I think the students skimmed over, but the end result is a close reading and analysis of the articles. While I supplement with current media and articles, I use [They Say/I Say with Readings](#) by Gerald Graff, Cathy Birkenstein, and Russel Durst, which has a reading topic thread called *Are 24, Family Guy, and Grand Theft Auto Actually Good for You?* This includes several essays about screen time and critical thinking.