**Considering the Writing Task—Letter to the Editor**

A common way to respond to an editorial is to write a letter to the editor. Now that you have worked extensively with this text, you are ready to write a well-informed response to Rifkin’s or Braithwaite’s ideas.

Some points to note before writing your letter to the editor follow:

1. A good letter to the editor is focused and concise. It should make your point, but no words should be wasted. It is sometimes best to write a longer draft and then cut out everything that is not essential.
2. Newspaper editors often cut letters to fit the available space or to make a letter more focused. If your letter is published unedited, you are very lucky.
3. Some letters respond to the thesis of the editorial, either in support or disagreement, and provide further arguments or further evidence. Other letters focus on one point made by the original author and support it, question it, or refute it.
4. These days, most letters are emailed to the newspaper. To get a letter published in a major newspaper, you must write it quickly and send it within a day or two of the publication date of the editorial to which you are responding.
5. If the newspaper wants to publish your letter, you will normally receive a call or an email to get permission and to verify that you really are who you say you are.
6. Newspapers are interested in a wide range of viewpoints from diverse citizens. If your letter is a good expression of a particular viewpoint, brings up new information or arguments, or has some particularly good phrases, it has a good chance of being published.

Choose one of the Letter-to-the-Editor assignments below.

**Response to Rifkin**

After thinking about your reading, discussion, and analysis of Rifkin’s article and the letters in response to it, what do you personally think about Rifkin’s point? Do you think it is true, as Rifkin says, that “many of our fellow creatures are more like us than we had ever imagined”? Do you think we need to change the way we treat the animals around us? Or do you think Rifkin is wrong? Write a letter expressing your viewpoint to the editor of the newspaper.

**Response to Braithwaite**

Victoria Braithwaite argues that fish have nervous systems that are similar to humans and are very likely to feel pain the way we do. She says, “We should adopt a precautionary ethical approach and assume that in the absence of evidence to the contrary, fish suffer.” She also says, “Of course, this doesn’t mean that we necessarily must change our behavior. One could reasonably adopt a utilitarian cost-benefit approach and argue that the benefits of sportfishing, both financial and recreational, may outweigh the ethical costs of the likely suffering of fish.”

Should we ban the use of barbed hooks? Should we change our fishing practices because fish might suffer? Or is Braithwaite making a big deal out of nothing? Write a letter expressing your viewpoint to the editor of the newspaper.