

Explaining the rationale behind our actions and decisions is an important kind of reflective writing because it makes visible what is otherwise invisible. Amy can see that Elizabeth may have chosen to write an e-mail in Comic Sans font, but unless Elizabeth explains why, the choice may seem mysterious and odd to Amy. Composers and artists of all sorts often write a statement for their audience that explains their inspirations, intentions, and choices in their creative and critical processes. The liner notes that come with a CD, the program you receive at the theater or symphony, the Director's Statement on a DVD, the Artist's Statement pinned to the wall at an art gallery — these are all forms of Authors' or Artists' Statements. We write explanations of our decisions to support many academic, workplace, and public genres. Below, we discuss an academic example and an example from a public setting; a workplace example might be a self-review or part of an organization's annual report.

WRITE

What are some examples of Authors'/Artists' Statements that you've seen lately? How does understanding a composer's perspective and intent contribute to how you relate to the composer's work? Write a quick list of movie scenes, lyrics, art pieces, and other creative works you've understood differently once you read or heard about the composer's rationale.

There is an example of a reflective statement written by a chef for the magazine *Cook's Illustrated* below. The point of the discussion — or what you could call an Author's Statement, as the chef is the author of the recipe he is explaining — is to explain and discuss what went into the creation of the recipe, what went well, and what could have gone better, as well as to discuss the cooking process. The Author's Statement articulates the different, otherwise invisible, choices and decisions the chef made in the creation of the recipe, from the selection of one ingredient over another to the order in which ingredients are combined and why. The Author's Statement discusses not just what ended up in the final recipe but what was tried but didn't work, and why it didn't work. In this way, the statement helps readers understand the invisible logic behind the finished product, the recipe.

You may wonder why a cook would go to all this trouble — to not just develop a recipe but then to put energy into articulating in writing the process of developing the recipe. The rhetorical situation of writing for *Cook's Illustrated* is that readers are not your typical home cooks who just want to get a meal on the table fast. *Cook's Illustrated* readers are serious foodies who don't mind spending hours on a recipe and they want to understand every decision the chef made so they can learn from the chef's mistakes or maybe even use the recipe as inspiration for their own creation.



Credit: America's Test Kitchen.

► CHEF PHOTO

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