

Name _____

Boxing

Despite its dangers, boxing has for many years and in many cultures attracted enthusiastic participants and fans. Clearly, boxing appeals to many people. But many others object to boxing, believing that it is not only dangerous but also savage, and crosses the boundary that distinguishes sport from violence. What place does boxing have in human culture? Is boxing a viable athletic pursuit and public entertainment? Or is boxing a brutal enterprise that should no longer be sanctioned?

Check off as you complete the Summaries:

___ Source A

___ Source B

___ Source C

___ Source D

___ Source E

___ Source F

___ Source G

___ Additional Source

___ Additional Source

Source A (Hazlitt)

Hazlitt, William. "The Fight." *New Monthly Magazine*, February, 1822.

The following passage is excerpted from William Hazlitt's account of the December 11, 1821 match between William Neate and Thomas Hickman, The Gasman, held in England.

Reader, have you ever seen a fight? If not, you have a pleasure to come, at least if it is a fight like that between the Gas-man and Bill Neate. The crowd was very great when we arrived on the spot; open carriages were coming up, with streamers flying and music playing, and the country-people were pouring in over hedge and ditch in all directions, to see their hero beat or be beaten. The odds were still on Gas, but only about five to four....

In the first round everyone thought it was all over. After making play a short time, the Gas-man flew at his adversary like a tiger, struck five blows in as many seconds, three first, and then following him as he staggered back, two more, right and left, and down he fell, a might ruin. There was a shout, and I said, "There is no standing this." Neate seemed like a lifeless lump of flesh and bone, round which the Gas-man's blows played with the rapidity of electricity or lightning, and you imagined he would only be lifted up to be knocked down again. It was as if Hickman held a sword or a fire in the right hand of his, and directed it against an unarmed body. They met again, and Neate seemed, not cowed, but particularly cautious. I saw his teeth clenched together and his brows knit close against the sun. He held out both his arms at full-length straight before him, like two sledge-hammers, and raised his left an inch or two higher. The Gas-man could not get over this guard - they struck mutually and fell, but without advantage on either side. It was the same in the next round; but the balance of power was thus restored - the fate of the battle was suspended. No one could tell how it would end. This was the only moment in which opinion was divided; for, in the next, the Gas-man aiming a mortal blow at his adversary's neck, with his right hand, and failing from the length he had to reach, the other returned it with his left at full swing, planted a tremendous blow on his cheek-bone and eyebrow, and made a red ruin of that side of his face. The Gas-man went down, and there was another shout - a roar of triumph as the waves of fortune rolled tumultuously from side to side. This was a settler. Hickman got up, and "grinned horrible a ghastly smile," yet he was evidently dashed in his opinion of himself; it was the first time he had ever been so punished; all one side of his face was perfect scarlet, and his right eye was closed in dingy blackness, as he advanced to the fight, less confident, but still determined. After one or two rounds, not receiving another such remembrancer, he rallied and went at it with his former impetuosity. But in vain. His strength had been weakened, - his blows could not tell at such a distance, - he was obliged to fling himself at his adversary, and could not strike from his feet; and almost as regularly as he flew at him with his right hand, Neate warded the blow, or drew back out of its reach, and felled him with the return of his left. There was little cautious sparring - no half-hits - no tapping and trifling, none of the petit-maîtreship of the art - they were almost all knock-down blows: - the fight was a good stand-up fight. The wonder was the half-minute time. If there had been a minute or more allowed between each round, it would have been intelligible how they should by degrees recover strength and resolution; but to see two men smashed to the ground, smeared with gore, stunned, senseless, the breath beaten out of their bodies; and then, before you recover from the shock, to see them rise up with new strength and courage, stand steady to inflict or receive mortal offence, and rush upon each other, "like two clouds over the Caspian" - this is the most astonishing thing of all: - this is the high and heroic state of man! From this time forward the event became more certain every round; and about the twelfth it seemed as if it must have been over. Hickman generally stood with his back to me; but in the scuffle, he had changed positions, and Neate just then made a tremendous lunge at

50 him, and hit him full in the face. It was doubtful whether he would fall backwards or forwards; he hung suspended for about a second or two, and then fell back, throwing his hands in the air, and with his face lifted up to the sky. I never saw anything more terrific than his aspect just before he fell. All traces of life, of natural expression, were gone from him. His face was like a human skull, a death's head, spouting blood.

55 The eyes were filled with blood, the nose streamed with blood, the mouth gaped blood. He was not like an actual man, but like a preternatural, spectral appearance, or like one of the figures in Dante's "Inferno." Yet he fought on after this for several rounds, still striking the first desperate blow, and Neate standing on the defensive, and using the same cautious guard to the last, as if he had still all his work to do;

60 and it was not till the Gas-man was so stunned in the seventeenth or eighteenth round, that his senses forsook him, and he could not come to time, that the battle was declared over. Ye who despise the FANCY, do something to show as much pluck, or as much self-possession as this, before you assume a superiority which you have never given a single proof of by any one action in the whole course of your lives! -

65 When the Gas-man came to himself, the first words he uttered were, "Where am I? What is the matter?" "Nothing is the matter, Tom - you have lost the battle, but you are the bravest man alive." And Jackson whispered to him, "I am collecting a purse for you, Tom." - Vain sounds, and unheard at that moment! Neate instantly went up and shook him cordially by the hand, and seeing some old acquaintance, began to flourish with his fists, calling out, "Ah, you always said I couldn't fight - What do you think now?" But all in good humour, and without any appearance of arrogance; only it was evident Bill Neate was pleased that he had won the fight. When it was all over, I asked Cribb if he did not think it was a good one? He has, "Pretty well!" The carrier-pigeons now mounted into the air, and one of them flew with the news of her

70 husband's victory to the bosom of Mrs. Neate. Alas, for Mrs. Hickman!

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Discourse Activity

- 1) Hazlitt is not writing about whether or not boxing should be banned. What is the value of this text in light of the assignment?
- 2) Which details convey Hazlitt's attitude toward this particular boxing match?
- 3) Given the assignment, what is the importance of these details?

Source B (Makinde)

Makinde, Adeyinka. "Pug of Ages: 'Weep for Me.'" *WAIL! Online Journal*, November 2002. 6 January 2007. <http://www.cyberboxingzone.com/boxing/w1102-ampug.html>.

The following is an online article about the nature of boxing. The author, a native of Nigeria and an attorney, has written a biography on African boxer Dick Tiger.

The saga of modern boxing, the sport of sanitized brutality, continues into a new century. This in itself is something of an achievement, for many powerful interests have over the preceding decades taken the view that the existence of the sport is inherently antithetical to the values held sacred within a functioning civilized

5 society and still agitate for its obliteration. The industry is thus forced, time and again, to justify itself, to revalidate, and to campaign for its perpetuation. In every succeeding era, boxing, to borrow an overused phrase, appears always to be on the ropes, absorbing each body blow tossed its way and suffering from a self-inflicted cancer of corruption and fighter exploitation. And you have to hand it to the game:

10 against all the odds it continues to survive and when in the midst of a dollar raking, record breaking super bout it tends to muster once in a while, it may give the

15 impression to the unerring observer of an industry that thrives. But peel away the
façade of money and glamour, and one sees it for what it really is: an unholy alliance
of interdependent groups of sanctioning bodies and promoters who wield power and
20 garner profits at the expense of many fighters. It is perhaps instructive to look at
boxing and boxers over a time scale. The chronology of time and the use of hindsight
allow us to assess its capacity, or lack thereof, to evolve. For if we are to be in a
position to judge its progress and development, we need to set out the themes and
structures in its past to use as points of comparison to the present state of the game,
[including] the sources of monies involved, the competence of its organization, as
well as the influences of race and class.

25 Boxing has and always will be a passionate game, a spectacular visual display of
high drama. Its rituals of ring entrances, fighter introductions and instructions bear
the unmistakable traces of the theatrical. But more than being a vehicle for mere
theatre (although it has on many an occasion descended into the farcical), it is an all
too real and brutal stage. It is show business with an emphasis on bloody wounds and
concussive blows (the 'show' aspect) and a business apt at leaving a trail of broken
bodies and fractured spirits. This was the case at the beginning of the modern era
30 (which saw the transition of the game from bare fist fighting to gloved-up Marquis
of Queensbury principles) and is still the case today. But in the gifted fighter of the
kind that Willie Pep was, that Sugar Ray Robinson was and Roy Jones is, we see the
beauty of pugilism. We are seduced into a comfortable state of awe and admiration
for these fighting types as indeed we are by the cruder art of a Duran or a Tyson.

35 Boxing is about money. Always has been. The feats of entrepreneurs of the ilk
of Tex Rickard in attracting copious amounts of money bear fitting testament to
the spirit of *laissez faire* economics. And while the sources of this money may have
changed, the underlying drive aimed at reaping the top dollar continues. The only
40 problem here is that much of the "risk" is still on the boxer's side. Promoters will, in
general, fashion a financial safety net by first obtaining financial guarantees from
television or cable networks before embarking on the fight project. While fighters may
be guaranteed purses before entering the ring, they are often short-changed by the
devious practices of promoters who may also act as (or who certainly have a strong
influence on)...managers. The problem with boxing is that it is an unreconstructed
45 aspect of the capitalist system. It is basically unregulated, and this has had dire
consequences on the fortunes of its primary participant: the boxer. The monopolistic
tendencies of the IBC¹, which had inherited the powerful position of Mike Jacobs'
Twentieth Century Sporting Club, may have been ended at the end of the 1950s by
the application of anti-trust legislation. But it appears to have been succeeded by an
equally pernicious arrangement of the splintered sanctioning bodies....

50 The rewards to the top echelon fighters have always been great. For the successful
fighter, boxing in its most positive sense remains a valid means of social mobility and
of personal redemption. It has continued to serve as route to fame and riches for the
delinquent urchin of the mold of, say, Floyd Patterson. For Bernard Hopkins, a former
resident of a notorious penitentiary, boxing proved literally to be a lifesaver. But for
55 every fighter who appears to have achieved economic security and purpose in life,
there are many more who have slid into indigence and poor health. While one may
strongly argue the case for [assuming] individual responsibility for one's destiny, this
may be too harsh a standpoint, given the purported caliber of many boxers' advisers
who fail to set up the requisite trust funds, health and miscellaneous insurance
60 programs on behalf of their fighters. Instead, we find these advisers frequently...in
unconscionable situations involving conflict of interest and outright theft. Thus, in
one sense, the ill-advised, blood sucked boxer of today is in no better position than
his predecessor of, say, the time of Beau Jack and Ike Williams, two fighters who lost
much of their purses to unscrupulous managers. The story of the boxer as conveyed
65 by the popular tune composed in the 1960s by Paul Simon, is not a story that is
"seldom told." His is an ageless lament replayed in the tales of Beau Jack, Randolph

1 International Boxing Club. A corporation formed to promote major boxing events at arenas in several major cities in the United States. The IBC was dissolved after the courts ruled that it constituted a monopoly.

Turpin, Kid Gavilan, Wilfred Benitez, Iran Barkley. Sing it as an old blues vehicle, as Sonny Liston once foretold, or compose it in the style of a Tin Pan Alley weeper, the result is the same: a bitter-sweet reflection swathed in melodies of melancholia.

70 Death is an ever-present threat. The codification of rules, the advances in medical care, and the shortening of rounds cannot remove this. Thus, the modern fighter, like his forebears, enters the ring knowing that it may be the last day of his life. Jimmy Doyle knew, as did Johnny Owen and Benny Paret. Yet, it is painful to note that in the year 2001 Beethaven Scotland, who ought to have expected a greater level of care and protection given the lessons 'learned' from previous tragedies, succumbed to what appears to many to have being a needless and preventable death.

75 The boxing game remains a turf upon which societal racial attitudes are played out. The ranks of boxers are populated in the main by those of African-American and Latin lineage. The quest for a white hope that is encapsulated in the personage of a White-hued Caucasian bearing the potentialities of becoming the world heavyweight champion still subsists, lurking in the minds of fight fans, a large segment of whom are White. Those familiar with boxing hagiography will pinpoint the era of Jack Johnson as the period during which this form of tribal bias took root. The long and hard fight for co-option of blacks into the mainstream of American society arguably had a helping hand from boxing, notably through "The Brown Bomber"—Joe Louis. 85 The diminution of white fighters has intensified such yearnings for a white champion, manifesting itself in the fictional Rocky movies and, in real life, in the Gerry Cooney phenomena that culminated in his unsuccessful bid to oust Larry Holmes from his championship throne. Today, it has been strongly argued by some that many white 90 North American heavyweights, although severely limited in the skills factor, are nevertheless pushed well beyond their justified rankings in order to satisfy this misguided, tribally motivated lust. Moreover, the introduction into the professional ranks of pugilists from the Slavic lands has provided those with visions of a white heavyweight conqueror with renewed hope. While it would perhaps be overly idealistic to expel such instincts from the human makeup, the point is that fighters 95 should not be given unmerited advantages because of the paleness of their skins or be granted higher ranking merely because they are well-supported by sections within the Latino community.

100 The thing that is most striking about the fight game is how little things have changed for the majority of fighters who toil at the lower rungs of the game and who end up poor and in ill health. And this still is the case for many of those who competed at the higher echelons of the game. Boxing is badly in need of reform. The pre-eminence of the United States in the sport means that such reform needs to be initiated and applied within that country. Efforts made to enact legislation, 105 court victories by fighters successfully suing this or that sanctioning body, and the recent probe into the IBF² are, while laudable, merely piecemeal. What is needed is a comprehensive and radical package of reform fashioned by the combined views of fans, journalists, and interested bodies. But most important of all are the fighters, particularly those who are the champions of the day, who ought to be prepared to act in unity by giving legitimacy to a new order. Until this happens, the time for 110 administering the obsequies at the industry's funeral will surely be at hand.

Discourse Activity

- 1) How does the writer establish his position as an expert?
- 2) What do you believe is the chief argument of this text? Why?
- 3) In light of the central question of this cluster, what are the most compelling observations presented in this text?

2 International Boxing Federation. One of several worldwide organizations that rates fighters, governs boxing and sanctions championship matches.

Source C (Oates)

Oates, Joyce Carol. "On Boxing." Princeton, NJ: Ontario Review Press, Inc., 1987.

The following is excerpted from a celebrated author's extensive commentary on boxing.

Each boxing match is a story—a unique and highly condensed drama without words. Even when nothing sensational happens: then the drama is “merely” psychological. Boxers are there to establish an absolute experience, a public accounting of the outermost limits of their beings; they will know, as few of us can know ourselves, what physical and psychic power they possess—of how much, or how little, they are capable. To enter the ring near-naked and to risk one’s life is to make of one’s audience voyeurs of a kind: boxing is so intimate. It is to ease out of sanity’s consciousness and into another, difficult to name. It is to risk, and sometimes to realize, the agony of which *agon* (Greek, “contest”) is the root.

In the boxing ring there are two principal players, overseen by a shadowy third. The ceremonial ringing of the bell is a summoning to full wakefulness for both boxers and spectators. It sets into motion, too, the authority of Time....

In the boxing ring, even in our greatly humanized times, death is always a possibility—which is why some of us prefer to watch films or tapes of fights already past, already defined as history. Or, in some instances, art. Most of the time, however, death in the ring is extremely unlikely; a statistically rare possibility like your possible death tomorrow morning in an automobile accident or in next month’s headlined airline disaster or in a freak accident involving a fall on a stairs or in the bathtub, a skull fracture, subarachnoid hemorrhage. Spectators at “death” fights often claim that afterward that what happened simply seemed to happen—unpredictably, in a sense accidentally. Only in retrospect does death appear to have been inevitable.

If a boxing match is a story it is an always wayward story, one in which anything can happen. And in a matter of seconds. Split seconds! (Muhammad Ali boasted that he could throw a punch faster than the eye could follow, and he may have been right.) In no other sport can so much take place in so brief a period of time, and so irrevocably.

Because a boxing match is a story without words, this doesn’t mean that it has no text or language, that it is somehow “brute,” “primitive,” “inarticulate,” only that the text is improvised in action; the language a dialogue between the boxers of the most refined sort in a joint response to the mysterious will of the audience which is always that the fight be a worthy one so that the crude paraphernalia of the setting—ring, lights, ropes, stained canvas, the staring onlookers themselves—be erased, forgotten. Ringside announcers give to the wordless spectacle a narrative unity, yet boxing as performance is more clearly akin to dance or music than narrative.

Discourse Activity

- 1) In the above excerpts, Joyce Carol Oates claims or suggests that:
- 2) Oates employs a metaphor to account for the nature of boxing. What makes this metaphor appropriate?
- 3) How does Oates’s diction convey her attitude toward boxing?
- 4) How would Oates respond if boxing were banned? What makes you think so?

Source D (Marino)

Marino, Gordon. "Boxing and the Cool Halls of Academe." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, August 13, 2004. <http://chronicle.com/free/v50/i49/49b00501.htm>.

The following is excerpted from a publication that covers matters of interest to those who work in higher education. The author is a professor of philosophy, curator of the Kierkegaard Library, assistant football coach at Saint Olaf College, and trainer of amateur boxers.

Carlo Rotella, an associate professor of English and director of American studies at Boston College and the author of *Cut Time: An Education at the Fights* (Houghton Mifflin, 2003), spent a year taking notes in the gym of the former heavyweight champion Larry Holmes. Rotella contends that life is all about hurting and getting hurt, and that there are few courses in life that prepare you for the whirring blades outside your door like boxing. In the introduction to one of the best boxing books ever written, Rotella remarks:

"The deeper you get into the fights, the more you may discover about things that would seem at first blush to have nothing to do with boxing. Lessons in spacing and leverage, or in holding part of oneself in reserve even when hotly engaged, are lessons not only in how one boxer reckons with another but also in how one person reckons with another. The fights teach many such lessons—about virtues and limits of craft, about the need to impart meaning to hard facts by enfolding them in stories and spectacle, about getting hurt and getting old, about distance and intimacy, and especially about education itself: Boxing conducts an endless workshop in the teaching and learning of knowledge with consequences."

Still, I think the best defense of boxing is Aristotelian. In his *Nichomachean Ethics*, Aristotle offers his famous catalog of the moral virtues. Whenever I teach this section of the *Ethics* I always begin by asking students what they think are the ingredients of moral virtue. Respect, compassion, honesty, justice, and tolerance always fly quickly up onto the board, often followed by creativity and a sense of humor. I usually need to prod to elicit "courage." And so I hector, "How can you be consistently honest or just if you don't have the mettle to take a hit?"

Aristotle writes that developing a moral virtue requires practicing the choices and feelings appropriate to that virtue. Accordingly, colleges today often offer a smorgasbord of workshoplike events to help develop the virtue of tolerance, for example, by making students more comfortable with people from diverse backgrounds. But where are the workshops in courage, a virtue that Nelson Mandela, John McCain, and others have claimed to have found in boxing?

According to Aristotle, courage is a mean between fearlessness and excessive fearfulness. The capacity to tolerate fear is essential to leading a moral life, but it is hard to learn how to keep your moral compass under pressure when you are cosseted from every fear. Boxing gives people practice in being afraid. There are, of course, plenty of brave thugs. Physical courage by no means guarantees the imagination that standing up for a principle might entail. However, in a tight moral spot I would be more inclined to trust someone who has felt like he or she was going under than someone who has experienced danger only vicariously, on the couch watching videos.

In fact, boxing was a popular intercollegiate sport until the early 1960s, when a fatality and problems with semiprofessionals' posing as students counted the sport out. In 1976 college boxing was resurrected as a club sport, and now, under the umbrella of USA Boxing (the governing body for amateur boxing in the United States), the National Collegiate Boxing Association includes about 30 college teams. Every April sectional, regional, and national championships are held. I recently chatted with Maja Cavlovic, a female boxer from Estonia who graduated from the Virginia Military Institute this spring. A power puncher, Ms. Cavlovic reflected, "Boxing helped me learn how to control my emotions. You get in there and you are

very afraid, and then all of your training takes over.”

50 The two-time heavyweight champion George Foreman concurs with Ms. Cavlovic. In addition to being an immensely successful businessman, Mr. Foreman directs a large youth club outside of Houston with a vibrant boxing program. Since Mr. Foreman also is a preacher I asked him, “How do you reconcile teaching kids to deliver a knockout blow with Jesus’ injunction that we should turn the other cheek?” Mr. Foreman chuckled and explained, “To be successful in the ring you have to get control of your emotions—that includes anger. And the kids who stick with it in the gym are much less violent than when they came in through the door.”

55 Americans for the most part live in a culture of release in which passion and spontaneity are worshipped. Beyond being told that troublesome feelings are medical problems, our young people receive scant instruction in modulating their emotions. As a result, there are very few opportunities to spar with heavyweight emotions such as anger and fear. In the ring, those passions constantly punch at you, but if you keep punching, you learn not to be pummeled by your emotions. Keeping your guard up when you feel like leaping out of the ring can be liberating. After he won his first bout, I asked Karl Pennau, a St. Olaf student whom I trained, what he had gleaned from his study of the sweet science. He replied, “Learning boxing has given me a lot more than just another sport to play. It is a tough, tough game, but having trained and been in the ring, I won’t ever think that I can’t do something again.”

Discourse Activity

- 1) In this passage, Gordon Marino argues that:
- 2) What authority can Marino claim over this subject? How does that authority compare with the authority wielded by an observer such as Hazlitt or Oates or a commentator such as Makinde?
- 3) In light of the task and your discourse with other sources, pose a question, comment, or observation for Marino and speculate on his response.

Source E (Bird)

Bird, Patrick J., Ph.D., “Health Related Issues Concerning Boxing.” Keeping Fit, Column 419. University of Florida: College of Health and Human Performance. Originally published in *The St. Petersburg Times*, 1995.
<http://www.hhp.ufl.edu/faculty/pbird/keepingfit/ARTICLE/BOXING.HTM>

The following is the complete text of a newspaper column written by the former Dean of the College of Health and Human Performance at the University of Florida.

Q. Why isn’t boxing banned, particularly in the Olympics? This is brutal sport that seems to pile casualty on causality.

5 A. Boxing is not banned from the Olympic Games because promoters of the sport have successfully argued that: The risk of injury to amateur fighters is no greater than that of athletes participating in other sports. And amateur boxing is quite different from professional boxing. To appreciate this position, and perhaps why the amateur boxing people have prevailed, it’s helpful first to understand the head injury problem itself and then to consider the how the American Medical Association and the USA Amateur Boxing Association view of the sport.

10 The Head Injury Problem. The repeated blows to the head that a fighter must endure can damage his brain. And short of outlawing punches to the head, little can be done to protect the athlete from this injury. The reason is that while the brain

15 is well protected by the skull, this three pound mass of cells can still move around inside its protective cover—just like an egg yolk in its shell. So when the head is hit by a hard blow, the skull strikes the brain and sends it rebounding off the opposite wall of the skull. This repeated trauma during a fight is like violently shaking an egg in its shell—the yolk is broken while the shell remains intact. Even using head gear, like putting the egg in a carton, can't fully prevent the brain from rattling around the skull in response to heavy pounding to the head.

20 American Medical Association View (AMA). When a professional fighter steps into the ring, there is little question that he is risking serious and perhaps fatal injury. This has been apparent for a long time. Since 1940, for example, at least 300 professional boxers have died as a result of injuries sustained in the ring, and scores more have suffered permanent brain damage.

25 But the inherent dangers of the sport received little national attention until November 1982 when South Korean Boxer Duk Koo Kim died following a widely televised championship fight against Ray "Boom Boom" Mancini. As a result of the publicity surrounding this brutal battle (Mancini reportedly peppered Kim with over 2000 blows), and the accumulating medical evidence against boxing, the AMA took action.

30 A year after the Kim's death, the association commissioned a panel to investigate boxing. And in 1984, based on the panel's findings, the AMA called for a total and complete ban of all boxing. Other national and international medical groups soon followed suit. Still, boxing has yet to be banned in the US and most other countries.

35 USA Amateur Boxing Association (USA Boxing). Supporters of amateur boxing, including many physicians, say it's unfair to lump professional and amateur boxing together since they operate under different rules and objectives. USA Boxing points out that amateur bouts are limited to three rounds of three minutes each. The gloves used are heavier, larger and more absorbent than those used by professionals. Amateurs are coached to seek "points" rather than knockouts to attain victory. Headgear is required to minimize at least facial wounds. Bouts are stopped when boxers are at risk of head injury. And the training emphasis is on speed, skill, enthusiasm, and discipline—not on annihilating the opponent.

45 As a result of this approach to the sport, and because amateurs have far fewer career fights than professionals, USA Boxing says that brain injury among amateur fighters is not a problem. In making its case, the association point to a 1993 Swedish study that compared former amateur boxers with soccer players and track and field athletes found no sign of brain damage in any of the groups (Swedish and US amateur boxing rules are similar).

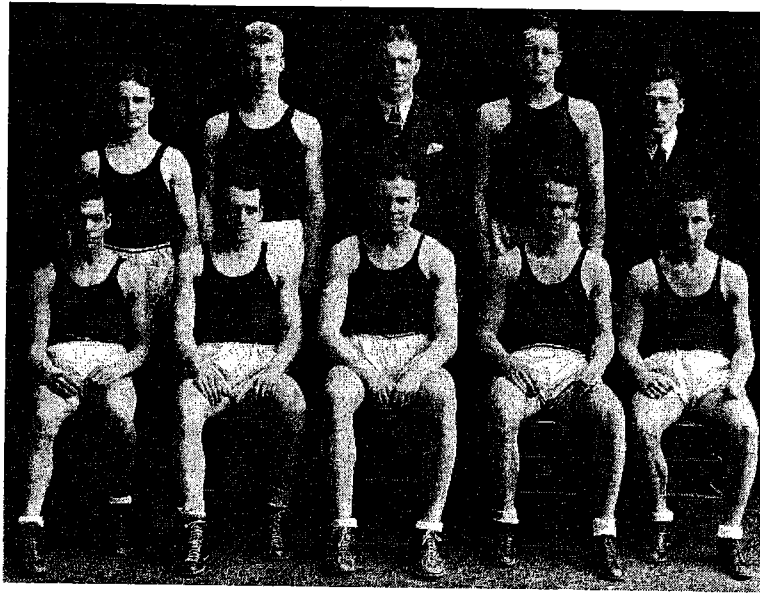
50 Bottom Line. It seems that the verdict is in on professional boxing. Ban the sport. But the jury is still out on amateur boxing. The International Olympic Committee's Medical Commission continues to support the inclusion of the sport in the Olympic Games, although its fate is still in question. For instance, a 1994 Johns Hopkins study of nearly 500 amateur fighters reported measurable declines in memory function associated with number of bouts fought. Also, there are ethical, moral, psychological, and sociological issues concerning boxing, on any level, that still trouble many people.

Discourse Activity

- 1) Does the form of the interviewer's question to Patrick Bird shape the answer? Why or why not?
- 2) What features distinguish Bird's argument from that of Makinde?
- 3) What authority does Bird bring to a discussion about boxing? How is his authority different from that of Makinde or Oates?
- 4) What, if anything, do Bird and Marino share in terms of experience?

Source F (Photo)

Private Collection. "Varsity Boxing Team, 1937." Harvard College, Cambridge, Massachusetts.



The above is a photograph of the last varsity boxing team at Harvard College. The sport was dropped at the conclusion of the 1937 schedule.

Discourse Activity

- 1) This image suggests:
- 2) Make two observations about the photo based on its subject, its orientation and point of view, its setting, and character.
- 3) Direct two questions at the athletes and speculate on their responses.

Source G (BBC Sport)

BBC Sport. Monday, 18 December, 2000, 17:30 GMT. "Is Boxing a Spent Force?"
http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport2/hi/other_sports/1076689.stm.

In this presentation, British Broadcasting Company (BBC) Sport Online offers its audience two conflicting views from medical professionals: Dr. Adrian Whiteson, chief medical officer for The British Boxing Board of Control (BBBC), and Vivienne Nathanson of the British Medical Association.

BBC: Should boxing be banned and why?

- 5 **Nathanson:** Yes, boxing should be completely banned. There are two problems. There are those occasional tragedies where someone is killed or critically injured, plus there is the chronic problem that when someone is hit on the head they have a minor degree of injury to the brain. This becomes cumulative and then we cannot repair the damage with small tears. In extreme cases, severe Parkinson's Disease can set in.

10 *Dr. Whiteson:* Boxing should not be banned. There are a number of acute injuries that happen in boxing. But the chronic injuries, such as with the brain, are actually very rarely seen these days. If boxing is banned it would be pushed underground and would be incredibly difficult to administer, risking even more injury to fighters. Boxers are often from underprivileged backgrounds and it provides discipline, dietary improvements, and keeps many fighters away from temptations such as alcohol and drugs. But from a moral point of view, it is up to each individual to decide their own direction. Nobody is pushed into the ring.

15 *BBC:* How safe is boxing these days?

Nathanson: There is no safe level of boxing. Any blow to the head is harmful. Head injuries are the most serious concern. The medical staff can deal with a blood clot but the real answer must surely be prevention. Stopping boxing would prevent exposure to chronic brain damage, which would ultimately save many other boxers' lives.

20 *Dr. Whiteson:* With the safety measures in place that have developed over recent years, boxing is a very safe sport. There is a huge amount of medical back-up in place as they anticipate what happens in the ring and are able to act swiftly at every occasion. The BBC are able to take away the licenses of boxers if they consider a boxer to be unfit to participate.

25 *BBC:* How does the danger in boxing compare with other sports?

Nathanson: The thing that separates boxing from all other sports is the chronic and continuing damage of the brain that is inflicted on almost every participant in the sport.

30 *Dr. Whiteson:* Considering the hours of participation from boxers, there are very few injuries. Boxing, in my opinion, is one of the safest sports. There are huge gains to be had in boxing. The boxers are told it is dangerous but if they are fit and healthy and sensible they will make a rational judgment on whether to fight or not. Assuming they are matched correctly with their opponents then generally they will be fine.

Discourse Activity

- 1) Briefly restate and evaluate the argument of Nathanson.
- 2) Briefly restate and evaluate the argument of Whiteson.
- 3) Imagine Nathanson and Whiteson could each select another source author to join in this interview. Who would each choose and why? What would their partner add to the discussion?

Boxing

Activity: Planning Your Essay

After concluding all Discourse Activities following the sources, review your responses.

State your own argument before proceeding to prepare and write your essay. Then consider the following questions:

How does each source relate to your own argument?

Which sources best support your argument?

Specify the sources you will cite. Plan clear, distinct references to three to five sources that best support your argument.