4. Rose presents a gallery of diverse character sketches of both teachers and students: Brother Dill, Mr. Mitropetros, Mr. Montez, Mike Dweetz, Billy Hawk, Dave Snyder, Ted Richard, Ken Harvey, and Rose himself. What purpose do these vivid characterizations serve in Rose’s general focus on the inadequacies of the U.S. educational system? Do they make the problems more memorable? More understandable? Do they run the risk of oversimplifying the problems? Explain your answers.

5. Write an essay about how it actually felt to be a student in your high school for readers who don’t know your family or your town. Who and what in your high school career helped you decide to attend college? Consider Nancy Willard’s advice in “The Buzzard and Aesop’s Fable” (p. 456) to show, not tell, and write so as to enable your readers to see people and experience events through your words.

TODD GITLIN

Disappearing Ink

Born in 1943 in New York City, Todd Gitlin attended Harvard University and the University of Michigan before going on to earn a doctorate in sociology at the University of California at Berkeley, where he was later a professor of sociology and director of the mass communications program. He currently teaches in the department of culture and communications in the School of Education at New York University. A social and media critic with a decidedly liberal slant, Gitlin is the author of The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left (1980); Inside Primetime (1983), a highly praised critique of network television; The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage (1987), a largely autobiographical account of the countercultural movements of the 1960s, focusing on Gitlin’s own term as president of the radical group Students for a Democratic Society; and The Twilight of Common Dreams: Why America Is Wracked by Culture Wars (1995). He also contributes to a number of periodicals; has served on the editorial board of the magazine Dissent; and has published both poetry and fiction, including, most recently, the novel Sacrifice (1999). “Writing about media and popular culture,” he has said, “gave me a way of slicing into a whole tangle of political, social, cultural, and intellectual questions.”

In the following essay, which originally appeared on the op-ed pages of the New York Times (September 10, 1999), Gitlin explains why he cannot support services that supply college students with downloaded lecture notes for core courses.

Hearing that a new Internet company is now posting free notes for core courses at 62 universities threw me back to a time in the 1980’s when I was teaching a