In first-year writing courses at IUSB, your writing assignments will challenge you to look at two or more readings and ask you to reflect on the authors’ ideas. If you work through such an assignment with appropriate care and attention to detail, you will have written a paper with ideas more complex than you can easily fit into the traditional five-paragraph theme that includes an opening, closing, and three supporting paragraphs. Rather than using your conclusion to give the last word on an issue or simply to drive home your main point once again, think of your concluding paragraph as an opening up rather than a closing down of the material. When you get to the end of your paper, instead of asking “What have I said?” which will lead you to a recap of your discussion, try to answer one or two of the following questions:

- What have my readers learned beyond the information I gave them in the first paragraph?
- What’s at stake?
- How does this matter?
- What is the significance of my findings?
- Why is this an important topic to write about?
- What impact does this topic/discussion have on society? On me?
- What new questions does this topic raise, perhaps for further inquiry?

Answers to these questions lend credibility to your ideas. Consequently, your readers will take you seriously, consider your ideas more thoughtfully, and will be provoked into new thinking. You paper will be more interesting—more lively—and you will have succeeded in keeping the dialogue going between readers and writers, the cornerstone of university learning.

Sample Concluding Paragraph:
(From a paper entitled, “New Language? What’s Wrong with the Old One? Try comparing this to the opening paragraph of this same paper in the “Introduction to Introductions” handout on page 18).

Because community can ultimately regulate how individuals feel, it can become quite difficult for them to create a new language; however, the experiences of Rodriguez and Sanders help explain why creating a new language is so crucial. Because Rodriguez and Sanders grasped the concept of a new language, they were able to use this language to help develop new identities which allowed them to reshape their old beliefs about male identity. Since Seidler’s article helps explain why Rodriguez and Sanders had difficulty interpreting their own male identity, it becomes important to reflect on the insight he has provided. By mulling over Seidler’s points, individuals can learn to recognize if their own male identity has been somehow misconstrued. However, given the subtle way male identity can be embedded within an individual’s belief
system, some individuals might fail to realize the significant impact their communities have had on them. By learning to distinguish the inconsistencies that community produces, like Rodriguez and Sanders, individuals can reshape their male identities into an ideal image of who they want to be.