

WE ARE AMERICA

A Thematic Reader and Guide to Writing



Fourth Edition

Anna Joy

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PREFACE

The purpose of *We Are America: A Thematic Reader and Guide to Writing* is to introduce beginning writers to the writing process, to basic reading skills, and to the essential elements of effective writing—unity, coherence, completeness, and sentence skills. This textbook includes a thematic reader whose selections reflect culturally and ethnically diverse points of view. Readings, discussion questions, and topics for writing are designed to mirror students' backgrounds and concerns, and to increase students' sensitivity to experiences and cultural perspectives different from their own. Ideally, students will see themselves, their ideas, and their cultural or ethnic group as an important part of the larger, and increasingly more complex, American experience.

Organization

The selection and organization of material in this book reflect the goals outlined above. Part I is an introduction to the writing process and a guide to active reading. Journal and freewriting exercises in Chapter 1 give students writing practice they need to gain confidence in their writing. Models of marginal notes and sample summaries in Chapter 2 illustrate active reading techniques, which students apply in a series of exercises. The second chapter also introduces techniques for reading and responding to poetry. Chapter 3 and parts of Chapter 5 introduce the writing process and explain how the steps in writing can be used to compose paragraphs and essays. Chapter 3 features samples from one student's writing as she used the process to compose a paragraph. Once students observe the thinking that goes into each stage of the process, they complete a series of exercises that can help them turn their own ideas into paragraphs and essays. Chapters 4 and 5 introduce the principles behind well-written paragraphs and essays, and ask students to revise sample papers for unity, development, and coherence.

Part II is a cross-cultural reader and guide to writing designed to help students master several writing strategies. Chapters in this section include an overview of the material presented in the chapter, a discussion of one writing strategy (such as narrating, describing, explaining, evaluating, or persuading), a model essay written by a professional or student writer, and additional suggestions for applying the writing process to papers that employ the strategy featured in the chapter.* "For Further Reading," the last section of chapters in Part II, provides additional readings and examples of student writing consistent with the theme and approach to writing covered in the chapter.

* Chapter 9, "Getting an Education," provides a slight variation on the usual chapter format. Rather than feature a writing strategy, Chapter 9 shows students how to draw inferences from what they read.



Discussions of model essays support the premise that students will become better writers if they can identify the key features, and rhetorical and organizational patterns in the writing of others.

Part III focuses on sentence skills and is aimed at improving students' mastery of standard, academic English. Exercises show students how to find and correct errors that may appear in their own work. In addition, sentence-combining exercises target sentence fluency and correctness in student writing.

As a whole, the three parts of this textbook provide students with a complete writing program, the elements of which form a coherent whole. In Chapter 2, for example, instructions for active reading and for writing summaries give students information they need to analyze reading selections in Part II. Instructions on the writing process in Chapters 3 and 5 prepare students to write paragraphs and essays in response to topics that follow readings in Part II. "Topics for Writing" make connections between two or more writers' approaches to a subject. Exercises in Parts I and III help students practice revising for coherence and development as well as for sentence correctness.

Features

Clear explanations followed by practice exercises characterize the material in Part I. Basic writing and active reading techniques introduced in this section prepare students for more demanding tasks in Part II.

Chapters in Part II are arranged both by theme—family, traditions, men and women, immigrants, the work place, and stereotypes—and by the level of complexity of the writing strategy they introduce. Except for Chapter 9, which helps students draw inferences from what they have read, each chapter in Part Two introduces a writing strategy—narrating, describing, classifying, comparing and contrasting, causal analysis, defining, evaluating, problem solving, taking a stand, and persuading. Students study models of each writing strategy and practice using it in their own work.

The reading selections in Part II address a wide range of reading abilities and student interests, giving instructors a great deal of flexibility in designing courses to fit their students' needs. The readings progress from first-person narration to more challenging modes of writing, making the textbook appropriate for several levels of developmental writing. The *Instructor's Manual* offers several sample syllabi for designing courses.

"For Practice" exercises in Part I, and the freewriting exercises in "Writing before Reading," "Questions for Discussion," and "Topics for Writing" that accompany the readings in Parts I and II help students connect what they have read to their own experience. These exercises also give students the frequent critical thinking and writing practice that is so important for beginning writers.

Like the professional selections in this textbook, the examples of student writing reflect a broad spectrum of personal and cultural issues and address

many of the concerns of developmental writers. In Part I, student samples illustrate journal writing (Chapter 1), techniques for writing summaries (Chapter 2), and the process of writing paragraphs and essays (Chapters 3 and 5). In Part II, student papers illustrate particular writing strategies and reinforce the theme of the chapter. In addition, many of the exercises in Part III are taken from students' writing.

Vocabulary lists and explanations of word usage follow readings in Parts I and II. These vocabulary sections build students' word-recognition skills.

Four appendices provide students with questions for generating ideas and evaluating papers. An index of key terms, authors' names, and titles of reading selections makes the text easy to use.

New In This Edition

The fourth edition retains the original vision of *We Are America* as a text that provides the elements of an effective writing program—an introduction to rhetoric, a reader, and a handbook of sentence skills. In addition, new readings in Part II reflect culturally and ethnically diverse points of view. While the vision of the text remains unchanged, several features have been added, augmented, or improved.

In Part I, Chapter 2: Writing about Reading now includes an article by Paul Rogat Loeb titled “The Civil Rights Movement Was the Sum of Many People,” the selection used to illustrate techniques for active reading. In addition, Chapter 2 introduces guidelines for responding to poetry that will prove useful to students when they read poems that appear in chapters in Part II.

Five new readings and five poems by professional writers are included in Part II: A Cross-Cultural Reader. A new selection, Arthur Ashe’s “A Black Athlete Looks at Education,” (Chapter 16), introduces the theme of stereotypes and self-imposed limitations as well as illustrating strategies for writing papers in which the writer takes a stand on an issue. Other new nonfiction readings are: Jane Singer, “*Chanoyu* the Way of Tea” and James Cagney, “How to Make a Sandwich” (Chapter 8); Katha Pollitt, “Why Boys Don’t Play with Dolls” (Chapter 11); Vine Deloria, Jr., “Indian Humor” (Chapter 14). The six poems new to this edition are “We Real Cool” by Gwendolyn Brooks (Chapter 2), “Inheritance” by Gary Soto (Chapter 7), “A Poison Tree” by William Blake (Chapter 10), “The River-Merchant’s Wife,” by Li Po, translated by Ezra Pound (Chapter 11), “Short-Order Cook,” by Jim Daniels (Chapter 15), and “Nikki Rosa,” by Nikki Giovanni (Chapter 16).

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Anna Joy

CONTENTS

Preface v

PART I AN OVERVIEW OF THE WRITING PROCESS 1

1 First Steps 3

TAKING STOCK 3

GATHERING YOUR THOUGHTS 5

Freewriting 5

Keeping a Journal 6

Looking Ahead 10

2 Writing about Reading 11

ACTIVE READING 11

Techniques for Active Reading 12

Why Use the Active Reading Method? 13

“The Civil Rights Movement

Was the Sum of Many People,” Paul Rogat Loeb 13

WRITING SUMMARIES 16

WRITING BEFORE READING 18

Reading and Summarizing 18

“The Watcher at the Gates,” Gail Godwin 19

RESPONDING TO THE READING 21

Building Your Vocabulary 22

Questions for Discussion 24

TOPICS FOR WRITING 25

RESPONDING TO POETRY 25

Poetic Form 25

“We Real Cool,” Gwendolyn Brooks 26

Poetic Voice 26

Figures of Speech 27

Questions for Discussion 28

TOPICS FOR WRITING 29

Looking Ahead 29

3 Writing Paragraphs: The Process 30

WHAT IS THE WRITING PROCESS? 30



WHAT IS A PARAGRAPH?	31
STEPS TO WRITING	31
Step One: Developing a Topic	31
Step Two: Thinking about Your Audience	35
Step Three: Preliminary Writing	40
Step Four: Organizing Ideas	44
Step Five: Writing a Fast Draft	53
Step Six: Editing and Proofreading	54
Step Seven: Sharing Your Writing	56
Step Eight: Making Final Revisions	58
TOPICS FOR WRITING	60
Looking Ahead	60
4 Revising Paragraphs	61
BASIC PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE	61
Key Words in Topic Sentences	65
Narrowing Topics	66
Statements of Fact	68
REVISING PARAGRAPHS	71
Writing Unified Paragraphs	71
Writing Well-Developed Paragraphs	74
Writing Coherent Paragraphs	79
Looking Ahead	84
5 Writing Essays	85
WHAT IS AN ESSAY?	85
Questions for Discussion	90
THE PROCESS FOR WRITING ESSAYS	90
NARROWING THE TOPIC	90
WRITING A THESIS	91
Placing the Thesis in the Essay	92
Narrowing the Thesis	94
Too Narrow a Thesis	98
WRITING A TITLE	100
ORGANIZING BODY PARAGRAPHS	102
STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING IDEAS	104
COHERENCE	107

SPECIAL PARAGRAPHS	110
Introductions	110
Conclusions	114
REVISING ESSAYS	115
TOPICS FOR WRITING	119
Looking Ahead	120

PART II A CROSS-CULTURAL READER 121

6 Family and the Sense of Self	123
NARRATING	124
Characteristics of Narrating	125
DESCRIBING AND EXPLAINING	128
Characteristics of Describing and Explaining	129
WRITING BEFORE READING	130
“Mother,” Russell Baker	130
RESPONDING TO THE READING	134
Freewriting	134
Vocabulary List	134
Questions for Discussion	135
TOPICS FOR WRITING	135
THE WRITING PROCESS: NARRATING	136
Developing a Topic	137
Thinking about Your Audience	137
Preliminary Writing	137
Organizing Ideas	138
Writing a Fast Draft	138
Sharing and Revising	139
<i>Student Writing</i> “One Mistake,” Betty Tilman	140
Questions for Discussion	141
FOR FURTHER READING	142
Writing before Reading	142
“Fathers Playing Catch with Sons,” Donald Hall	142
RESPONDING TO THE READING	144
Freewriting	144
Vocabulary List	144

Questions for Discussion	144
TOPICS FOR WRITING	145
WRITING BEFORE READING	146
“My Papa’s Waltz,” Theodore Roethke	146
RESPONDING TO THE READING	147
Freewriting	147
Vocabulary List	147
Questions for Discussion	147
TOPICS FOR WRITING	147
7 A Sense of Place	149
DESCRIBING	150
Characteristics of Describing	150
WRITING BEFORE READING	153
“Rules of the Game,” Amy Tan	153
RESPONDING TO THE READING	155
Freewriting	155
Vocabulary List	155
Questions for Discussion	155
TOPICS FOR WRITING	155
THE WRITING PROCESS: DESCRIBING	156
Developing a Topic	156
Thinking about Your Audience	157
Preliminary Writing	158
Organizing Ideas	159
Making Final Revisions	159
FOR FURTHER READING	159
Writing before Reading	159
“Self and World,” Annie Dillard	160
RESPONDING TO THE READING	162
Freewriting	162
Vocabulary List	162
Questions for Discussion	163
TOPICS FOR WRITING	163
WRITING BEFORE READING	164
“Inheritance,” Gary Soto	164

RESPONDING TO THE READING	166
Freewriting	166
Vocabulary List	166
Questions for Discussion	166
TOPICS FOR WRITING	166
<i>Student Writing</i> “Garage,” Norman Ferguson	167
Questions for Discussion	168
<i>Student Writing</i> “I Miss You, Mr. Fish,” Arina Hung	168
Questions for Discussion	169
8 The Richness of Tradition	171
PROCESS ANALYSIS	172
Characteristics of Process Analysis	172
Possible Reliance on Other Writing Strategies	173
WRITING BEFORE READING	174
“The Art of Lion Dancing,” Donald Inn	174
RESPONDING TO THE READING	176
Freewriting	176
Questions for Discussion	176
TOPICS FOR WRITING	176
THE WRITING PROCESS: PROCESS ANALYSIS	177
Developing a Topic	177
Thinking about Your Audience	177
Preliminary Writing	178
Organizing Ideas	179
Writing a Fast Draft	179
Sharing and Revising	179
FOR FURTHER READING	179
Writing before Reading	179
“Kwanzaa: Holiday of ‘Principles to Live By,’” Eugene Morris	180
RESPONDING TO THE READING	181
Freewriting	181
Vocabulary List	181
Questions for Discussion	182
TOPICS FOR WRITING	182
WRITING BEFORE READING	182

<i>“Chanoyu, The Way of Tea,” Jane Singer</i>	183
RESPONDING TO THE READING	186
Freewriting	186
Vocabulary List	186
Questions for Discussion	187
TOPICS FOR WRITING	187
<i>Student Writing “How to Make a Sandwich,” James Cagney</i>	187
Questions for Discussion	189
<i>Student Writing “Memories of Thanksgiving Day,” Norma Davis</i>	189
Questions for Discussion	191
INTERVIEWING	191
<i>Student Writing “Randy: The Best of Two Cultures,” Liz Ann Larson</i>	193
Questions for Discussion	195
THE WRITING PROCESS: WRITING AN ORAL HISTORY	195
Developing a Topic	195
Preliminary Writing	196
Organizing Ideas	197
Writing a Fast Draft	198
Sharing and Revising	198
<i>Student Writing “To Be Thankful,” Sam Masuno</i>	199
Questions for Discussion	201
TOPICS FOR WRITING	201
9 Getting an Education	203
DRAWING INFERENCES	204
Sample T-Graph	205
Drawing Inferences from Details in Your Reading	206
WRITING BEFORE READING	208
<i>“The Struggle to Be an All-American Girl,” Elizabeth Wong</i>	208
RESPONDING TO THE READING	210
Freewriting	210
Vocabulary List	210
Questions for Discussion	210
TOPICS FOR WRITING	210
FOR FURTHER READING	211
Writing before Reading	211

	“I Just Wanna Be Average,” Mike Rose	211
	RESPONDING TO THE READING	220
	Freewriting	220
	Vocabulary List	220
	Questions for Discussion	221
	TOPICS FOR WRITING	221
	WRITING BEFORE READING	222
	“Theme for English B,” Langston Hughes	222
	RESPONDING TO THE READING	223
	Freewriting	223
	Questions for Discussion	223
	TOPICS FOR WRITING	224
	<i>Student Writing</i> “The Truth about High School,” Thomas Carbone	224
	Questions for Discussion	225
10	Self and Others	227
	CLASSIFYING	228
	Characteristics of Classifying	228
	WRITING BEFORE READING	231
	“What Ever Happened to Friendship?” Art Jahnke	231
	RESPONDING TO THE READING	237
	Freewriting	237
	Vocabulary List	237
	Questions for Discussion	237
	TOPICS FOR WRITING	238
	THE WRITING PROCESS: CLASSIFYING	239
	Developing a Topic	239
	Thinking about Your Audience	239
	Preliminary Writing	239
	Organizing Ideas	240
	Sharing and Revising	241
	FOR FURTHER READING	241
	Writing before Reading	241
	“Personal Politics: A Lesson in Straight Talk,” Lindsay Van Gelder	241
	RESPONDING TO THE READING	243

Freewriting	243
Vocabulary List	243
Questions for Discussion	243
TOPICS FOR WRITING	243
WRITING BEFORE READING	244
“Just Walk On By: A Black Man Ponders His Power to Alter Public Space,” Brent Staples	244
RESPONDING TO THE READING	247
Freewriting	247
Vocabulary List	247
Questions for Discussion	248
TOPICS FOR WRITING	248
WRITING BEFORE READING	248
“A Poison Tree,” William Blake	249
RESPONDING TO THE READING	249
Freewriting	249
Vocabulary List	250
Questions for Discussion	250
TOPICS FOR WRITING	250
<i>Student Writing</i> “Ducks vs. Hard Rocks,” Deairich Hunter	250
Questions for Discussion	253
11 Men and Women	255
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING	256
Characteristics of Comparing and Contrasting	256
WRITING BEFORE READING	260
“Why Can’t He Hear What I’m Saying?” Deborah Tannen	260
RESPONDING TO THE READING	266
Freewriting	266
Vocabulary List	266
Questions for Discussion	266
TOPICS FOR WRITING	266
THE WRITING PROCESS: COMPARING AND CONTRASTING	267
Developing a Topic	267
Preliminary Writing	267
Thinking about Your Audience	268

Organizing Ideas	268
Sharing and Revising	270
FOR FURTHER READING	271
Writing before Reading	271
“The Men We Carry in Our Minds,” Scott Russell Sanders	271
RESPONDING TO THE READING	274
Freewriting	274
Vocabulary List	275
Questions for Discussion	275
TOPICS FOR WRITING	275
WRITING BEFORE READING	276
“Why Boys Don’t Play with Dolls,” Katha Pollitt	276
RESPONDING TO THE READING	278
Freewriting	278
Vocabulary List	278
Questions for Discussion	278
TOPICS FOR WRITING	279
WRITING BEFORE READING	279
“The River-Merchant’s Wife,” Li Po. Tr. Ezra Pound	279
RESPONDING TO THE READING	280
Freewriting	280
Vocabulary List	281
Questions for Discussion	281
TOPICS FOR WRITING	281
<i>Student Writing</i> “Relationships,” Dan Krum	281
Questions for Discussion	283
12 Immigrants	285
EXPLAINING CAUSES AND EFFECTS	286
Characteristics of Causal Analysis	286
WRITING BEFORE READING	290
“The Immigrants: How They’re Helping to Revitalize the U.S. Economy,” Michael J. Mandel and Christopher Farrell	290
RESPONDING TO THE READING	297
Freewriting	297
Vocabulary List	297