

# The Short Prose Reader

*N i n t h   E d i t i o n*



Gilbert H. Muller

Harvey S. Wiener

# THE SHORT PROSE READER

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Gilbert H. Muller  
*The City University of New York  
LaGuardia*

Harvey S. Wiener  
*Marymount Manhattan College*

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## THE SHORT PROSE READER

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THE SHORT  
PROSE READER

# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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*To the memory of George Groman*

# PREFACE

The ninth edition of *The Short Prose Reader* maintains the best features of the earlier editions: lively reading selections supported by helpful apparatus to integrate reading and writing in college composition and reading courses. Each of the twelve chapters presents an essential pattern of writing. In working through the text, the student progresses from key aspects of the writing and reading processes to basic description and narrative, and then to the more rigorous forms of analysis and argument by means of diverse and lively prose models suited for discussion, analysis, and imitation.

New features of the ninth edition include

- greatly expanded treatment of the **writing process** in Chapter 1, including a **sample student essay** that evolves from brainstorming activities to the final product;
- added material on **critical reading** in Chapter 2, with an **annotated professional essay** for analysis and discussion;
- **sample student paragraphs** at the end of all rhetorically-focused chapter introductions;
- a new **annotated instructor's edition**. The complete text of the student edition appears in this enlarged teacher's edition, along with answers to the many questions posed in the apparatus following each essay. Moreover, in the margins of this annotated teacher's edition, we provide approaches to teaching each essay along with background information and numerous suggestions for guiding class discussion. The annotated edition offers carefully structured commentary on each essay, presenting a variety of strategies that should stimulate classroom dynamics and result in solid student writing;



- **two new sections in Chapter 12, “Short Classics” and “Modern Essays,”** which offer prose for further reading. “Short Classics” includes essays by Samuel Langhorne Clemens (Mark Twain), Martin Luther King, Jr., Plato, and Virginia Woolf, while “Modern Essays” includes selections by Annie Dillard, Yolanda Cruz, Tama Janowitz, Jamaica Kincaid, Scott Russell Sanders, and Anna Quindlen;
- **many new reading selections,** including essays by Walter Benjamin, Mary Cantwell, Barbara Ehrenreich, Molly Ivins, William Golding, Vivian Gornick, Kirk Johnson, Robert Ritchie, Jerrold Simon, and Nancy Shute. We balance these readings with favorites from the earlier editions of *The Short Prose Reader*: Langston Hughes’s “Salvation,” Malcolm X’s “Prison Studies,” Jonathon Kozol’s “Are The Homeless Crazy?” and Judy Brady’s “I Want a Wife” continue to offer timely and controversial subjects for reading and writing.

These new features enhance the key elements of *The Short Prose Reader* that have made the previous eight editions such a enduringly popular text.

## ORGANIZATION

The organization of *The Short Prose Reader* is one of its major strengths. Chapter 1, “On Writing,” is followed by “On Reading,” a chapter offering four unique views on the craft of reading by well-known writers. Each of the following nine chapters contains four short essays that illustrate clearly a specific pattern or technique—description, narration, illustration, comparison and contrast, definition, classification, process analysis, causal analysis, or argumentation. Students learn to build upon earlier techniques and patterns as they progress through the book. The last chapter, consisting of ten essays, offers students the opportunity to read and discuss short prose pieces that reflect the various rhetorical strategies.

## READABILITY

This is a readable text, and one that has ample representation by many different types of writers. Moreover, the essays, which range typically between 300 and 1200 words, achieve their goals succinctly and clearly and are easy to read and to understand.

The essays will alert students both to the types of college writing expected of them and to the length of an essay required frequently by teachers. The detailed questions that follow each essay can be used in reading as well as writing classes, since they ask the student to analyze both the content and the form of the prose selections.

## APPARATUS

Finally, the exercises we have included for each piece are comprehensive and integrated—designed to develop and reinforce the key skills required in college writing. Before each essay, students encounter an activity called “Prereading: Thinking about the Essay in Advance” which encourages students to think and talk about the topic before reading what the writer says about it. Studies show that such prior discussion arouses interest and holds the reader’s attention. Each selection includes two vocabulary exercises. “Words to Watch” alerts students to words they will read in context, and “Building Vocabulary” uses other effective methods (prefix/suffix, context clues, synonym/antonym, abstract/concrete) of teaching vocabulary.

To emphasize critical thinking as the main reason for questioning and discussion, we have grouped our conversational prods and probes under the heading “Thinking Critically About the Essay.” A section called “Understanding the Writer’s Ideas” reinforces reading comprehension. Sections entitled “Understanding the Writer’s Techniques” and “Exploring the Writer’s Ideas” provide excellent bases for class discussion and independent reading and analysis.

A section called “Prewriting” helps students record informal thoughts for writing in advance of producing an essay. A key exercise for each essay involves a dynamic approach to writing projects. Guided writing activities—a novel feature of *The Short Prose Reader*—tie the writing project to the reading selections. Instead of simply being told to write an essay on a certain topic, through “Guided Writing” students will be able to move from step to step in the composition process. “Thinking and Writing Collaboratively” activities encourage students to work together in groups on essays and ideas for writing. At the end of each chapter is a “Summing Up” section, a means for students to focus their attention on linking comparative issues in the chapter’s essays and on more writing topics.

Students and teachers alike can use *The Short Prose Reader* flexibly and effectively. An alternate table of contents suggests thematic groupings of readings. The text is simple yet sophisticated, inviting students to engage in a multiplicity of cultural and traditional topics through essays and exercises that are easy to follow but never condescending. Weighing the needs and expectations of today's college freshmen, we have designed a rhetoric/reader that can serve as the primary text for almost any composition course.

For this edition of *The Short Prose Reader* we enjoyed the support of both Tim Julet and his successor as English Editor, Lisa Moore, who has brought a fresh perspective and calm persistence to the project. We are also deeply grateful for the patient and extraordinary efforts of Alexis Walker, our Development Editor, to make the text even better than its predecessors. We also owe a debt of gratitude to Igor Webb, who assisted us throughout the revision process and produced the annotated instructor's edition.

We wish to thank our colleagues across the country for their support and are especially grateful to those who reviewed the manuscript for this edition:

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*Gilbert H. Muller*  
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