

A CLOSER LOOK

the writers' reader

SIDNEY I. DOBRIN • ANIS S. BAWARSHI

A CLOSER LOOK

The Writer's Reader

H315
E10

A CLOSER LOOK

The Writer's Reader

Sidney I. Dobrin

University of Florida

Anis S. Bawarshi

University of Washington

**Mc
Graw
Hill**

Boston Burr Ridge, IL Dubuque, IA Madison, WI New York
San Francisco St. Louis Bangkok Bogotá Caracas Kuala Lumpur
Lisbon London Madrid Mexico City Milan Montreal New Delhi
Santiago Seoul Singapore Sydney Taipei Toronto

The McGraw-Hill Companies



Higher Education

A CLOSER LOOK: THE WRITER'S READER

Published by McGraw-Hill, a business unit of The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 1221 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY, 10020. Copyright © 2003 by The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means, or stored in a database or retrieval system, without the prior written consent of The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., including, but not limited to, in any network or other electronic storage or transmission, or broadcast for distance learning. Some ancillaries, including electronic and print components, may not be available to customers outside the United States.

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 FGR/FGR 0 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

ISBN 0-7674-1743-7

President of McGraw-Hill Humanities/Social Sciences: *Steve Debow*

Executive editor: *Lisa Moore*

Developmental editor: *Renée Deljon*

Director of development: *Carla Kay Samodulski*

Senior marketing manager: *David S. Patterson*

Senior media producer: *Todd Vaccaro*

Lead project manager: *Susan Trentacosti*

Lead production supervisor: *Lori Koetters*

Designer: *Sharon Spurlock*

Manager, photo research: *Brian J. Pecko*

Art editor: *Cristin Yancey*

Cover design: *Joan Greenfield*

Interior design: *Linda Robertson*

Typeface: *11/12 Bembo*

Compositor: *Thompson Type*

Printer: *Quebecor World Fairfield Inc.*

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A closer look : the writer's reader / [compiled by] Sidney I. Dobrin, Anis S. Bawarshi.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references (p.) and index.

ISBN 0-7674-1743-7 (acid-free paper)

1. College readers. 2. English language—Rhetoric—Problems, exercises, etc. 3. Report writing—Problems, exercises, etc. I. Dobrin, Sidney I., 1967— II. Bawarshi, Anis S.

PE1417.C6313 2003

808'.042'0711—dc21

2002038662

www.mhhe.com

This one's for
HAT, NCS, VWC, ODU, & USF

To My Parents
Mona Bawarshi and Sami Bawarshi
With Love

DEC 13 2006

Used Book

Preface

In our combined 25 years of teaching composition, we have asked our students to read the work of professional writers, as most instructors do, to help them improve their own writing. But what does it mean to read in a writing course? What might be a better way for student writers to read, one that would give students a clearer sense of how to examine and practice reading as integral to writing, and writing, in turn, as rhetorical? With these questions in mind, we developed the rhetorical approach of *A Closer Look* to help composition students learn how to read as writers, so they develop the ability to read their own writing rhetorically. This text's primary goal, then, is to teach students how to make more effective choices as writers by teaching them how to look more closely (that is, rhetorically) at texts as readers—in other words, to teach them how to examine and compare different rhetorical strategies and effects.

We believe that this kind of rhetorical approach conveys to students an important message about writing itself. Because we treat reading and writing as rhetorical activities, we help students see that a written text is the result of complex choices made by its writer—and that they, the student writers, have more choices than they may be aware of when they sit down to write. By teaching students how to examine and compare different rhetorical strategies with different rhetorical effects, we hope to heighten students' awareness of the choices writers make, why they make them, and how these choices inform what texts mean and do. Students can then apply their rhetorical reading skills to their own writing, learning over time how to predict and assess the effects of their own writing choices on readers. In sum, we believe that helping students see the range of rhetorical options available to them when they write will help them expand their rhetorical repertoire so they become more agile and astute writers, writers who are better prepared to write effectively and creatively in a range of situations, in school and beyond.

To achieve this book's goal, we selected four essays by each of the 21 professional writers included in the book so students can see how the same writer made a range of rhetorical choices in response to different rhetorical situations. The writers we selected are among the most important of our time, and all but one (Stephen Jay Gould, who, sadly, died while this book was in production) are currently living and writing. The 84 essays by these writers, along with the 7 additional essays by student writers (which appear in a section following the professional writers' section), are

presented within their rhetorical contexts: Substantial overviews introduce each writer and extensive questions for reading and writing follow all but one of the four essays by each writer. The apparatus is designed to encourage students to consider the following key questions:

- What can we know about the writer and his or her rhetorical situation that can help us understand why he or she wrote a given text the way it appears?
- What are the consequences, the effects, of the writer's choices?
- What can we, as readers, learn about writing as a result of looking closely at how and why the writer wrote a particular essay the way she or he did—why did the writer make those choices?
- What other choices could the writer have made? How and why would the alternate choices have been effective in the same rhetorical situation? (We provide opportunities for students to practice such alternatives in their own writing.)

A Closer Look, therefore, focuses not only on *what* an essay means but also on *how* the writer crafted its meaning in the context of a rhetorical situation.

HIGHLIGHTED FEATURES

Multiple Essays by 21 of Today's Most Important Writers

Four essays represent each writer, so that students can analyze how the individual writer's rhetorical choices change from essay to essay (that is, from rhetorical situation to rhetorical situation). The collected essays, organized alphabetically by the writers' last names, cover a wide range of audiences—from readers of *Ms.* magazine to readers of *Golf* magazine—and a range of subjects—from breast implants to political exile, from censorship to naps. The essays also represent various subgenres, including personal, academic, and political essays. Rick Bass, Annie Dillard, Barbara Ehrenreich, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Stephen Jay Gould, Barry Lopez, Salman Rushdie, Amy Tan, John Updike, and Alice Walker are among the featured writers.

Essays about Writing

The first essay by each professional writer is about an aspect of writing (found under the heading “[writer's last name] on Writing”), so that students encounter different ways of thinking about and discussing writing, as well as a context for rhetorically analyzing the writers' work.

Substantial Editorial Apparatus

Each writer's section opens with an introduction that discusses the writer's life, body of work, the essays that follow, and initial rhetorical considerations to keep in mind. A contextualizing note with questions for reading (“At First Glance”) precedes each

selection, and “Double Take” questions for discussion and writing follow the first three essays. Each writer’s section concludes with “A Closer Look at [writer’s name]” discussion and writing questions that address all of the selections by that writer; “Looking from Writer to Writer” questions that address other writers in the text in addition to the writer immediately at hand; and “Looking Beyond,” brief listings of publications by the writer.

One Essay by Each Writer without Reading and Writing Questions

The last essay by each writer appears with only an “At First Glance” note, so students can be challenged to read closely and write on their own.

Seven Essays about Writing by Student Writers

Essays by seven student writers are included in the text, appearing after the last professional writer section. All the student essays have writing as their topic and each one is preceded by a brief note about the student writer, as well as an “At First Glance” note to guide students’ reading. Each student essay is followed by “Double Take” questions, just as the professional writers’ essays are.

General Introduction That Includes a Brief History of the Essay

The general introduction prepares students for the work ahead by providing key information. It covers the importance of connecting reading and writing; concepts of rhetoric and the rhetorical situation; the nature of rhetorical choices; an overview of *A Closer Look*’s structure and editorial apparatus; and a brief history of the essay, including a detailed portrait of the contemporary essay.

PRINT AND ELECTRONIC SUPPLEMENTS

Website to accompany *A Closer Look* at www.mhhe.com/Dobrin

Offering abundant links relevant to the authors, their rhetorical choices in the book’s selections, and their topics, and organized to follow the book’s alphabetical order, this site provides online resources for student projects, including research papers.

Resources for Teaching *A Closer Look*

This substantial instructor’s resource manual, available both in print and online, provides further background information for the writers and the essays, sample answers

to the questions, sample syllabi for both 10- and 16-week courses, and additional activities/considerations.

Teaching Composition Faculty Listserv at www.mhhe.com/tcomp

Moderated by Chris Anson at North Carolina State University and offered by McGraw-Hill as a service to the composition community, this listserv brings together senior members of the college composition community with newer members—junior faculty, adjuncts, and teaching assistants—through an online newsletter and accompanying discussion group to address issues of pedagogy, both in theory and in practice.

PageOut

McGraw-Hill's own PageOut service is available to help you get your course up and running online in a matter of hours—at no cost. Additional information about the service is available online at <http://www.pageout.net>.

Webwrite

This online product, available through our partner company MetaText, makes it possible for writing teachers and students to, among other things, comment on and share papers online.

For further information about these and other electronic resources, contact your local McGraw-Hill representative, visit the English pages on the McGraw-Hill Higher Education website at www.mhhe.com/catalogs/hss/english/, or visit McGraw-Hill's Digital Solutions pages at www.mhhe.com/catalogs/solutions.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As we hope this book demonstrates, writers and writing do not function in isolation. Writers and writing take place in relation to other writers and writing in contexts of interaction. Such is the case with this book, which could not have been completed without the assistance, advice, and support of many people. We are deeply grateful to the following people for their input during the process of constructing this book: Trish Ventura, Chris Keller, Carla Blount, and Christine Jean Hong who helped us gather and compile materials. We would also like to thank the students from around the country who submitted essays for this book. And for her

unfailing support and patience, we thank Amy Feldman. We are also indebted to the reviewers who made suggestions for revisions during the many drafting stages:

G. Douglas Atkins, *University of Kansas*

Nancy Backes, *Cardinal Stritch University*

Monica Barron, *Truman State University*

Kelly Belanger, *University of Wyoming*

Nick Capo, *Pennsylvania State University*

Rebecca Faery, *Massachusetts Institute of Technology*

Ed Frankel, *University of California, Los Angeles*

Lynne Lewis Gaillet, *Georgia State University*

Douglas Hesse, *Illinois State University*

Joy Marsella, *University of Hawaii*

Amy Pawl, *Washington University*

John Ramage, *Arizona State University*

Leslie Ullman, *University of Texas at El Paso*

We would also like to thank the folks at Mayfield Publishing Company for their support, support that has continued after Mayfield became McGraw-Hill. At McGraw-Hill, we have enjoyed and appreciated the expert contributions of Lisa Moore, executive editor; Alexis Walker, sponsoring editor; David Patterson, marketing manager; Susan Trentacosti, project manager; Sharon Spurlock, designer; Lori Koetters, production supervisor; Brian Pecko, photo research manager; Cristin Yancey, art editor; and Todd Vaccaro, media producer. Finally, and with great affection, we wish to thank and acknowledge Renée Deljon (first our sponsoring and then our development editor) for her support, encouragement, and genius. She is, by far, the greatest (and coolest) editor in the textbook business.

S.I.D. Gainesville, Florida
A.S.B. Seattle, Washington

Contents

INTRODUCTION: A Closer Look at *A Closer Look* 1

- Connecting Reading and Writing 2
- Understanding Rhetorical Choices 4
- A Brief History of the Essay 5
- The Contemporary Essay 7
- The Structure of *A Closer Look* 8

THE WRITERS AND THEIR ESSAYS 11

ANDRÉ ACIMAN 13

- “A Literary Pilgrim Progresses to the Past” 15
- “The Capital of Memory” 19
- “A Late Lunch” 29
- “Shadow Cities” 32

RICK BASS 41

- “Without Safety: Writing Nonfiction” 43
- “On Willow Creek” 51
- “Why I Hunt: A Predator’s Meditation” 63
- “Thunder and Lightning” 66

JOAN DIDION 77

- “Why I Write” 79
- “The Women’s Movement” 84
- “In Bogotá” 90
- “Girl of the Golden West” 97

ANNIE DILLARD 107

- From *The Writing Life* “Chapter One” A Line of Words 109
- “Total Eclipse” 118
- “Teaching a Stone to Talk” 127
- “Spring” 133

BARBARA EHRENREICH 147

Introduction to *The Snarling Citizen* 149

"Stamping Out a Dread Scourge" 153

"Premature Pragmatism" 156

"Oh, *Those* Family Values" 160

JOSEPH EPSTEIN 165

"Compose Yourself" 167

"A Mere Journalist" 179

"The Art of the Nap" 190

"Penography" 201

HENRY LOUIS GATES, JR. 213

"Writing, 'Race,' and the Difference It Makes" 215

"Sunday" 231

"In the Kitchen" 233

"Prime Time" 239

STEPHEN JAY GOULD

"Pieces of Eight: Confession of a Humanistic Naturalist" 251

"The Creation Myths of Cooperstown" 259

"A *Cerion* for Christopher" 268

"The *Great Western* and the Fighting *Temeraire*" 277

EDWARD HOAGLAND 287

"To the Point: Truth Only Essays Can Tell" 289

"The Courage of Turtles" 295

"Learning to Eat Soup" 301

"In Okefenokee" 313

bell hooks 329

"Women Who Write Too Much" 331

"Black Women Writing: Creating More Space" 337

"Touching the Earth" 343

"Justice: Childhood Love Lessons" 348

JAMAICA KINCAID 357

"Writing = Life" Interview with Writer Jamaica Kincaid 359

"In History" 365

"Alien Soil" 373

"Garden of Envy" 379

URSULA LE GUIN 383

- "Prospects for Women in Writing" 385
- "The Fisherwoman's Daughter" 387
- "The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction" 407
- "Along the Platte" 412

BARRY LOPEZ 419

- "We Are Shaped by the Sound of the Wind, the Slant of Sunlight" 421
- "The Stone Horse" 426
- "A Passage of the Hands" 434
- "A Presentation of Whales" 442

CYNTHIA OZICK 459

- "On Permission to Write" 461
- "The Hole/Birth Catalogue" 465
- "A Drugstore in Winter" 473
- "Rushdie in the Louvre" 479

SALMAN RUSHDIE 489

- "Imaginary Homelands" 491
- "The New Empire within Britain" 500
- "In Good Faith" 507
- "Censorship" 521

EDWARD SAID 527

- "No Reconciliation Allowed" 529
- "The Mind of Winter: Reflections on Life in Exile" 540
- "Palestine, Then and Now: An Exile's Journey through Israel and the Occupied Territories" 549
- "Jungle Calling" 563

SCOTT RUSSELL SANDERS 573

- "The Singular First Person" 575
- "Writing from the Center" 584
- "Letter to a Reader" 596
- "Buckeye" 609

AMY TAN 617

- "Lost Lives of Women" 619
- "Mother Tongue" 622

- “The Language of Discretion” 627
“In the Canon for All the Wrong Reasons” 634

JOHN UPDIKE 641

- “Why Write?” 643
“Cemeteries” 651
“Thirteen Ways of Looking at the Masters” 656
“The Tarbox Police” 665

ALICE WALKER 671

- “The Black Writer and the Southern Experience” 675
“In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens” 679
“My Daughter Smokes” 688
“Beyond the Peacock: The Reconstruction of Flannery O’Connor” 691

EDWARD O. WILSON 705

- “The Writing Life” 707
“The Serpent” 711
“Ethics and Religion” 723
“Humanity Seen from a Distance” 746

THE STUDENT WRITERS: ESSAYS ABOUT WRITING 753

- Sarah Huntley, “Before Beginning” 756
Monique Fournier, “Bees and Fears: Why I Write” 762
Melvin Sterne, “Untitled” 766
Kathe McAllister, “Blue Sky and Gravel: Where There Is No Plot” 770
Heidi Beck, “Why I Write” 776
Spencer Schaffner, “The Five-Paragraph Essay: Friend or Foe?” 784
Marianne Rasmussen, “The Selfish Art: Exploring Identity
through Writing” 790

CREDITS C-1

INDEX OF AUTHORS AND TITLES I-1

What my dentist cried
out one day after finally
removing an unsuspected
fourth nerve from one of
my molars comes to
mind each time I try to
understand myself as a
writer. • Voice is modu-
lated almost entirely by
distance: how close are
you to this subject? And
this one? And this one?
And will this subject *let*
you come closer? • In
many ways writing is the
act of saying *I*, of impos-
ing oneself upon other
people, of saying *listen to*
me, see it my way, change
our mind. • When you
write, you lay out a line
of words. • It comes to
me, in a surge of revolu-
tionary insight, that our
lives—meaning whatever
it is that continues to
happen when the TV is
off and even when the
power has failed—are
richer and vastly more
curious than anything we
will find in the flickering
realm of image and spec-
tacle. • As more and
more of my illusions
about myself continue to
fall away—to name just a
few among them: that I
was a fine little athlete,
not a bad dancer, a pretty

INTRODUCTION

A Closer Look at *A Closer Look*

This book is about writing. It is designed to give you the opportunity to examine other writers' essays and to consider the choices they made in writing them. Unlike other collections of readings that you may have used, this book not only focuses on what writers write about, but also on how they write about those subjects—the strategies writers use to communicate their subjects. By this, we mean that this book asks you to consider not just what subjects writers write about, but the historical and political contexts in which those subjects are addressed, the words through which writers address those subjects, the ways in which writers position themselves in their writing, the structure of their writing, the logic of their arguments, the audiences that might read these essays, and all of the other factors that shape why and how writers write about various subjects. In asking you to consider not only how to interpret the meanings of the essays gathered here but how these meanings have been produced, this book encourages you to begin seriously considering how you can produce meaning in your own writing. Throughout this text, we will ask you to pause and think about why the writers whose work is represented here have made the choices they have and how those choices affect their writing, and we will ask you to consider how similar choices affect your own writing, both academic and public.

The title of this book, *A Closer Look*, suggests a visual metaphor, one of looking at, examining, viewing. Throughout this book, we turn to this idea of viewing and ask you to take several glances and several in-depth looks at the kinds of choices writers make. This kind of close looking at writing is not unlike other kinds of inquiry you already know how to do. We come to know and act in the world through shared processes of inquiry, which involve the examination of what things and phenomena are, what they do, how they work, what they mean, and what effects they have. For instance, when you were a child and your parents showed you objects and told you what they were, they were teaching you how to make sense of them and how to use them. At school, teachers showed you ideas, facts, concepts, phenomena, and, along with others, you came to understand, question, and eventually apply them. The same holds true for writing. We can observe, speculate on, and examine the act of writing. We can discuss it with others. By doing so we learn what writing is and how to be effective writers. Then we put that knowledge to work, becoming more effective writers by producing writing. This book asks you to look closely at the writing of others, to discuss and consider that writing, so that you can consider the choices you make when you produce your own writing.

CONNECTING READING AND WRITING

Writing is about making choices. Among the various choices they have to make, writers frequently have to decide how to begin their texts; how to organize their ideas; what content to include, what to exclude, and how to order it; what sorts of examples to use and how to present them; how to structure different sentences; what tone to use; and which words to choose. Writers make decisions and these decisions have consequences. The more appropriate these decisions are, the more likely it is that readers will respond favorably to the writing—the more likely, that is, that they

will be convinced by the writer's argument or that they will have the kind of reaction that the writer had intended or that they will perform the action the writer is requesting. In this book, we will help you learn how to make more effective choices as a writer by showing you how to look more closely at texts as a reader. The more critically you are able to read and recognize the decisions other writers make in their writing, the more likely you will be able to make effective decisions in your own writing.

The choices writers make when they write are called **rhetorical choices**. **Rhetoric**, as it was defined by the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle, refers to the art of persuasion, to the way writers and speakers use language to get something done, whether it be to change someone's mind, to persuade someone to see your side of things, or to get someone to do something. Rhetoric, then, is the deliberate use of language to create some kind of effect. But since rhetoric is an art, as Aristotle was aware, there really isn't a precise formula that writers and speakers can use to help them communicate effectively in every situation and with every audience. Rather, rhetoric involves the art of making choices. It involves having to decide the best way to communicate in this given situation, on this given subject, and for this given audience. The decisions writers and speakers make when they are trying to accomplish something with language constitute their rhetorical choices.

Every time we communicate, we make rhetorical choices. We have to decide what tone to use in addressing our audience, what examples to use, what words to select, and so on. We do this all the time. Think, for example, about the rhetorical choices you make when you are talking to your best friend compared to the rhetorical choices you make when you are talking to your boss or even your parents. The choices you make and the way you act depend on the situation you are in and on the subject you are addressing. Certainly, you are likely to communicate and act differently at the gym from the way you communicate and act as a student in class, and how you communicate and act will depend on the subject you are addressing. Some subjects demand more serious treatment than others, while others require the use of specific words—what is referred to as *jargon*—as in academic and professional settings. The more appropriate your rhetorical choices are to your situation and subject, the more effective you will be in using language to communicate and accomplish what you want.

The same holds for writers. Writers make rhetorical choices and their choices shape the way their writing is read. But how do writers make these choices? How do they know which way to begin, how to organize their ideas, what examples and words to use? Although there is no exact formula you can use to answer these questions, there are strategies you can learn that will help you make your writing more appropriate and effective. If there is one thing we can say with certainty, it is that the choices writers make are not made randomly or arbitrarily. Effective writers, in other words, do not guess. Rather, they make calculated rhetorical decisions. Sometimes, of course, they make wrong decisions, even after multiple revisions; as a result, their writing does not succeed the way they had hoped. But more often than not, effective writers are making thoughtful decisions as they write and it is those decisions that ensure their writing will be successful.