

APPLICATIONS: Issues for Reading and Writing



AUDREY EDWARDS • R. ALLAN DERMOTT

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Issues for Reading and Writing

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Introduction

To us, the word *applications* bring back memories of smelly science labs: we were always being asked to say what we had learned and—what was even harder—how it applied to everyday life. In this book, you'll be asked to do just the reverse—to bring in your everyday life experiences and apply them to your course work. That is, we want you to use what you know to judge an author's ideas and write about them.

You may think you don't know enough to argue with a professional writer. We think you do. For one thing, you have had experiences no one else has had; you and your classmates together have had a great many experiences. For another thing, it's possible to reach different opinions from the same set of facts. In fact, this book gives two opinions on each topic: a short preview article and a longer essay following it. Once you've compared the two, you can draw your own conclusions.

There are eleven major topics in this book, ranging from juvenile offenders to life in the city. For each topic, the book has four steps: preview, reading, discussion, and writing. Unit One will lead you through each step in detail. Here are the highlights.

Preview

During the preview step, you'll be thinking a little about your own beliefs on the topic and reading a short preview article. Then you'll be taking a quick look at the essay—the title, the first and last paragraphs, and the author's background—so you can predict the main idea. You'll

also look at some quotes from the essay to figure out the meanings of any new words. (To assist you, we've included a list of common word parts in Appendix A at the back of the book.)

Reading

After the preview, you'll be ready to read the essay on your own. Following the essay are some reading questions dealing with the main idea, your reactions to it, and the author's writing techniques. Be sure to write down your answers to these questions so that you'll have notes to speak from when you discuss the essay. If an occasional question seems difficult, do the best you can and be prepared to compare ideas in class.

Discussion

This brings us to the discussion. By comparing notes with your classmates, you may find facts you've missed and you'll certainly find out about other people's ideas on the topic. The discussion helps to sum up your reading experience and prepare you for writing.

Writing

When you write, you'll be giving your opinion on the topic you've discussed. At this point, your short answers to the reading questions should help you collect your thoughts and even try out some of the writing techniques used by the authors. Once you've thought about your own experiences, as well as the beliefs of two authors and several classmates, you should have something very worthwhile to say.

We hope you will find the topics interesting and the activities useful. Once you have used this book, please let us know how we can improve it: just fill out the evaluation form at the end of the book and send it to us in care of Holt. Our students have given us many ideas already. We welcome your ideas too.

Acknowledgments

Our students contributed to *Applications* in two ways: they started us on the project by showing they could handle critical reading within a developmental course; in addition, they gave us many substantive comments on the essays, thereby proving that several heads are better than one in critiquing.

Our teaching colleagues provided advice, information, and warm encouragement.

Our editors at Holt and their several reviewers helped us to see the book clearly as it took shape—and to reshape where necessary. We especially thank Barbara Bisson, Santa Monica College; Paul Brown, Norwalk Community College; Aleeta Christian, Roane State Community College; D. W. Cummings, Central Washington University; Ana Jusino, Norwalk Community College; Charles Lynes, Fresno City College; Teresa Deen Massey, Roberts Wesleyan University; Mabel Pittman, Jackson State University; Carlene Walker, The University of Texas at El Paso.

Bonnie Bly and Albert Gordon did most of the library research.

Finally, Sharon Ritchie and Lynn Dermott typed the manuscript with precision, patience, and frequent feats of mind reading.

Our heartfelt thanks to all who helped make the book a reality.

Audrey T. Edwards
R. Allan Dermott

To Matthew, Mary,
Andrew, and Danica



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UNIT ONE

Critical Reading and Composition

Effective Group Discussion

Sometimes you're surprised by what you say: good ideas pop into your mind while you're talking. And sometimes other people's words will give you a new way of looking at things. Good discussion is truly creative.

In fact, discussion has such an effect on reading and writing that it's built into the plan for this book—in two places. First, a preview session allows you to think over a topic with other students before you read. Then, after you read, a second session lets you compare notes on the essay and prepare to write about it.

Of course, this class is not the only place where you'll be taking part in discussions. Over the course of a lifetime, you'll sit through many meetings—classes, clubs, sororities, business groups. They can be a pleasure or an annoyance, and although you can't entirely control the outcome, you can improve the odds—by improving the content and by helping the group to work more smoothly.

Content

If you've ever felt that you couldn't get a word in, that the discussion went on to something new before you could get your thoughts in order, try forming some opinions ahead of time. (Naturally, these can change when you hear other people's ideas, but at least you'll have a head

start.) Before a meeting, thoroughly read anything that's assigned. Mark the key parts and jot down a word or two to remind you of each point you want to make during the discussion. (In using this book, you probably won't be expected to prepare for the preview discussion, but you probably will be asked to write down your answers to the Reading Questions before class.) Then, just before the discussion, quickly look over your notes to refresh your memory. Having prepared, you'll be moving the session along instead of being dragged in its wake. The next question is how to move things along most effectively.

Task and Maintenance Roles

When you think of discussions, you may picture two people trading facts or opinions. Actually, though, a discussion becomes much more interesting when shared by several people playing a variety of roles. People may play either a "task role," helping the group to deal with the task at hand, or a "maintenance role," maintaining group harmony. Both kinds of help are important.

Read the following list of task roles. For each role that you can see yourself playing, draw a line to the left of the number. (We have done the first for you, since most people do give information.)

Task Roles (roles that help accomplish the group's task)

1. Information and Opinion Giver: Offers facts, opinions, ideas, suggestions, and relevant information to help group discussion.
2. Information and Opinion Seeker: Asks for facts, information, opinions, ideas, and feelings from other members to help group discussion.
3. Starter: Proposes goals and tasks to initiate action within the group.
4. Direction Giver: Develops plans on how to proceed and focuses attention on the task to be done.
5. Summarizer: Pulls together related ideas or suggestions and restates and summarizes major points discussed.
6. Coordinator: Shows relationships among various ideas by pulling them together and harmonizes activities of various subgroups and members.
7. Diagnoser: Figures out sources of difficulties the group has in working effectively and the blocks to progress in accomplishing the group's goals.
8. Energizer: Stimulates a higher quality of work from the group.
9. Reality Tester: Examines the practicality and workability of ideas, evaluates alternative solutions, and applies them to real situations to see how they will work.
10. Evaluator: Compares group decisions and accomplishments with group standards and goals.

Now read the following list of maintenance roles. Again, draw a line beside the numbers of any that seem to be your style.

Maintenance Roles (roles that help maintain group harmony)

11. Encourager of Participation: Warmly encourages everyone to participate, giving recognition for contributions, demonstrating acceptance and openness to ideas of others, is friendly and responsive to group members.
12. Harmonizer and Compromiser: Persuades members to analyze constructively their differences in opinions, searches for common elements in conflicts, and tries to reconcile disagreements.
13. Tension Reliever: Eases tensions and increases the enjoyment of group members by joking, suggesting breaks, and proposing fun approaches to group work.
14. Communication Helper: Shows good communication skills and makes sure that each group member understands what other members are saying.
15. Evaluator of Emotional Climate: Asks members how they feel about the way in which the group is working and about each other, and shares own feelings about both.
16. Process Observer: Watches the process by which the group is working and uses the observations to help examine group effectiveness.
17. Standard Setter: Expresses group standards and goals to make members aware of the direction of the work and the progress being made toward the goal and to get open acceptance of group norms and procedures.
18. Active Listener: Listens and serves as an interested audience for other members, is receptive to others' ideas, goes along with the group when not in disagreement.
19. Trust Builder: Accepts and supports openness of other group members, reinforcing risk taking and encouraging individuality.
20. Interpersonal Problem Solver: Promotes open discussion of conflicts between group members in order to resolve conflicts and increase group togetherness.

Now that you've seen how many different roles you can play, you know you can contribute in some way to an actual discussion. (You needn't attempt all these roles, of course, and you needn't stick with any one type. Just contribute your thoughts in a way that suits you and perhaps try a new role once in a while.)

Below is a short exercise called "Fallout Shelter." We recommend the following plan for its use.

First break up into groups of four or five people; move a little way apart from the other groups. Each group should choose one person to record group decisions. Next, read "Fallout Shelter." (It contains your task and all the information you will need.) As soon as everyone in your small group has finished reading, begin your discussion.

About halfway through the time allowed for discussion, STOP. As a group, consider the following questions. How many people have taken part so far? What went well? How could the discussion be improved during its second half?

Resume your discussion, and try to carry out any suggested improvements.

Once you've concluded the discussion, evaluate again. What roles did you actually play? Go back over the list of task roles: check the two or three you found yourself playing most often during the discussion of "Fallout Shelter." Then pick your two or three most important maintenance roles.

Finally, sum up: how did you help the group—either in getting the job done or in keeping the group going?

What would you like to do differently another time?



Fallout Shelter

Those in your group are members of a federal department in Washington, D.C., that is in charge of experimental stations in the far outposts of civilization. The Third World War has suddenly broken out and bombs are beginning to drop. Places all across the world are being destroyed. People are heading for whatever fallout shelters are available. You receive a desperate call from one of your experimental stations, asking for help. At the station are ten people, but there is only room in the nearby fallout shelter for six. They have decided to abide by your decision as to which six persons can go into the fallout shelter.

You have only superficial information on the ten people. After your group has made its decision it will try to reach its own fallout shelter. You realize that the six people you choose to go to the shelter may be the only six people left to start the human species over again. The choice, therefore, is crucial.

Here is what you know about the ten people:

1. Bookkeeper, thirty-one years old
2. His wife, six months pregnant
3. Black militant, second-year medical student
4. Famous historian-author, forty-two years old
5. Hollywood starlet, a singer and dancer
6. Biochemist
7. Rabbi, fifty-four years old
8. Olympic athlete, all sports
9. College coed
10. Policeman with gun (they cannot be separated)

Essay Questions: Fallout Shelter

1. Explain why one candidate for the shelter created a difficult decision for you. Tell why you finally made the decision you did.
2. Pick one personal feature (for example, age or ability to have children) that you think is very important in choosing candidates. Explain what makes that feature so important to you.
3. From the description of the candidates, make a list of their good features. Then, from the entire list of good features, choose two. Explain why one of these two features is more valuable than the other.

"Fallout Shelter" and the lists entitled "Task Roles" and "Maintenance Roles" are taken from David W. Johnson and Frank P. Johnson, *Joining Together: Group Theory and Group Skills*. Copyright © 1975, pp. 26, 27, 419. Reprinted by permission of Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J.