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# MAKING CONNECTIONS: READINGS FOR WRITERS

W. ROYCE ADAMS/GUY D. SMITH



# **Making Connections**

READINGS FOR WRITERS

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and

**GUY D. SMITH**

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# Preface

It is no secret that many of today's beginning college students are ill-prepared for the type of reading and writing required in most college courses. A major contributor to this deficiency is simply that most of these students have not and do not read much, let alone write much. Often, when such students are suddenly confronted with rhetorical anthologies and reading selections written by traditional writers, they tend to feel even more incompetent as they struggle to comprehend the readings and more frustrated when their own writing pales in comparison to the models held up for emulation.

Although *Making Connections* is yet another reader intended for use in freshman composition courses, it does have some distinct differences. For one, it provides detailed instruction on the reading skills necessary for close, intelligent reading. Students are shown how to prepare for close reading and how to read closely by marking the text or maintaining a reading journal of some type. Model markings and journal entries are also provided. Emphasis on close reading, we feel, is the beginning of good writing, but it is also a skill we want the students to continue to use long after their college experience is over.

The 48 reading selections used in this anthology are thematically arranged in ten units, covering such topics as American society and culture, television, the sexes, science and medicine technologies, ethics, work, education, language, people, and the future. On the whole the selections are from popular publications familiar to many students: *Time*, *Newsweek*, *U.S. News & World Report*, *Omni*, *Ms.*, *Discover*, *Psychology Today*, and other similar sources. By using these publications, we hope that students will realize that good writing and provocative ideas are easily accessible and that the skills required of them here can and should be continued long after class is over.

In addition to addressing reading skills, this text also presents an overview of the writing process from generating ideas to the revision stage. Of course, the emphasis here is on making the connection between reading essays and writing about the ideas contained in them. We present eight heuristics, or strategies, for discovering ideas students can use as a means for generating ideas for student essays. These heuristics include such methods as brainstorming and clustering techniques, freewriting, formulating hypothetical questions, reacting to statements and quotes from the readings, taking alternate points of view, and drawing comparisons. All these strategies are explained and then used as part of the apparatus following the essays.

Although this is a thematic reader, a chapter is devoted to an expla-

nation of rhetorical modes as a means for arranging ideas in an essay. We recognize the value of rhetorical approaches to writing, but feel that discovering and developing possible ideas for an essay should come before presenting rhetorical modes as a means for organizing those ideas, since some students tend to let the mode itself become more important than their development of thought.

The reading units can be read in any order and still stand alone. Except for the last reading selection in each unit where students are left on their own to practice the skills taught, each selection is presented in such a way that the reading skills and heuristics offered in this text are reinforced. For close reading and generating ideas for compositions, students are encouraged to develop their own methods that either combine or go beyond what we present here. Whereas the emphasis of this text is to provide students with something to think and write about, it does contain information on integrating other sources into their writing, and how to lead in and out of quoted material. Students who have serious writing deficiencies may need to consult a handbook.

An Instructor's Manual containing ideas for using this text may be obtained by writing to: Acquisitions Editor, College English, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 383 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017.

We would like to acknowledge responses and suggestions our students gave us in the preparation of this book. We wrote the book with those suggestions in mind. We also express our appreciation to Diana Sorenson for her insights and helpful criticisms, as well as the following reviewers: Phyllis Brown Burke, Hartnell College; Joe Cosenza, St. John's University; Richard Elias, Ohio Wesleyan University; Mary Ellen Grasso, Broward Community College; Dorothy Guinn, Arizona State University; Margaret Urie, University of Nevada—Reno; Charles Walker, Riverside City College; M. Deane White, Olivet Nazarene College; and Charlotte Smith and Lisa Owens, editors at Holt, Rinehart and Winston, for their helpful expertise.

W.R.A.  
G.D.S.

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PART **I**

# **Making Connections**

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# Reading: The Beginning of Good Writing

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## How to Read an Essay

"I read it, but I just don't understand it!"

This is a commonly shared student frustration after struggling through some assigned essays. While there is a tendency to blame the writer for not saying things more clearly, more often than not the problem is the reader's. Intelligent, analytical reading is a technique that must be learned. The reading assigned in most literature and composition courses requires an approach that demands an active engagement in the material, an in-depth search for understanding, a reading beyond the words. Intelligent reading requires the thinking through of the ideas being presented, not merely accepting but challenging and comparing them, including evaluating the merit and quality of the writing itself. Any reading approach that doesn't produce understanding at these levels is too shallow to be of any real value. This section offers you some techniques for developing your essay reading skills.

In *How to Read a Book*, the well-known philosopher and educator, Mortimer Adler, says:

If we consider men and women generally, and apart from their professions or occupations, there is only one situation I can think of in which they almost pull themselves up by their bootstraps, making an effort to read better than they usually do. When they are in love and are reading a love letter, they read for all they are worth.

They read every word three ways: they read between the lines and in the margins; they read the whole in terms of the parts, and each part in terms of the whole; they grow sensitive to context and ambiguity, to insinuation and implication; they perceive the color of the words, the odor of phrases, and the weight of the sentences. They may even take the punctuation into account. Then, if never before, they read.

If you read as Adler suggests, that is, read the way you would read a love letter, you merge mentally with the information provided. In effect, you participate in a dialogue between yourself and the author. But that dialogue has to be initiated by you, the reader. The writer has already done her/his part. The passive reader who allows the author to do all the talking creates an illusion that both are participating in a communication process when actually the exchange is one-sided. *inquiries → dealt with.*

The intelligent reader overcomes lack of communication by actively participating in a reading process that is like becoming acquainted with a new person. When you're first introduced, you may chat briefly to get a general feeling for the individual. After this initial contact, you might ask questions about his/her background, interests, work, and activities. But rarely do you have an in-depth conversation with a new acquaintance about significant values or philosophies until you have met several more times and have had an opportunity to get a better feeling for the person and until you feel comfortable enough to sustain a conversation on a level more meaningful than social amenities. Getting to know people on a meaningful level is just as difficult as getting to know an author on a meaningful level. Real connection takes effort and concentration.

How, then, does a reader go about getting to know on a meaningful level what an author is saying? Unlike pleasure reading, which is done for enjoyment with little emphasis on retention, the kind of reading being discussed here requires analysis. Until you have had continuous practice at analytical reading, the best way to approach an essay is to read it *at least* twice, each time with a different purpose. Since most of the essays in this anthology are relatively short, using the technique about to be described can be done in a comparatively brief period. Gradually, as your skills develop, the two-part reading strategy we present here will begin to merge into a productive method of your own.

For now, in order to get the maximum from reading an essay, we suggest at least two readings for these reasons. The first reading, what we call an "overview," should be done to get only a general impression of the essay. You read to see what the essay is about (the subject matter, also called topic) and what position or point of view the author takes toward the subject (the thesis). You don't try to understand every word, point, or detail during this reading. You just read to get an overall grasp of the essay. This helps focus your attention and familiarizes you with the subject of the essay. If you know or have already read anything about the topic, this first reading often triggers your memory and stimulates your interest.



The second reading, called “close reading,” demands more of you. Close reading requires examining and thinking more carefully about the author’s thesis and the issues involved. This is when you respond to the author by writing questions or comments in the margin, underlining key points, checking vocabulary words or phrases that hinder comprehension, and maybe even noticing the structure and writing methods the author uses. Doing all this forces you to go beyond the reading of words and into the realm of reader-author dialogue where ideas are examined, evaluated, and accepted or argued with or disregarded.

You might think that these two readings could take more time to complete than just reading the essay through once very carefully. Although it is possible that at first you might need more time than your normal study approach, research shows that once you master this reading technique, you will have better concentration, better comprehension, and better retention than before. This two-part process also puts you in touch with your feelings and ideas on the various topics in the essays, thus providing you with something to write about.

## A Model for Reading an Essay

### The First Encounter: Getting an Overview

Now for a closer look at the two suggested readings. Since the first reading is mostly for familiarization, don’t attempt to remember every word or point being made. Don’t get bogged down with unfamiliar terms. Often continuing to read on when you don’t understand something at the moment leads into material that is understandable. Don’t expect to read and know it all when you’re finished. You read only to get a general overview of the content and to familiarize yourself with the author’s viewpoint about the subject. In some cases you will be more interested in the subject matter than in others; you’ll have initial likes and dislikes. Some essays will seem more enjoyable or stimulating than others. Just accept that during the first reading. It’s possible that your viewpoint may change after the second reading.

Try this overview approach on the following essay from *Time Magazine*. As you do your first reading, look for answers to the following questions:

1. What is the essay about? What is the topic?
2. How well does the title fit the subject matter?
3. What are some of the various examples of dishonesty (duplicitous practices) the author discusses?
4. What do you think the author’s thesis is?