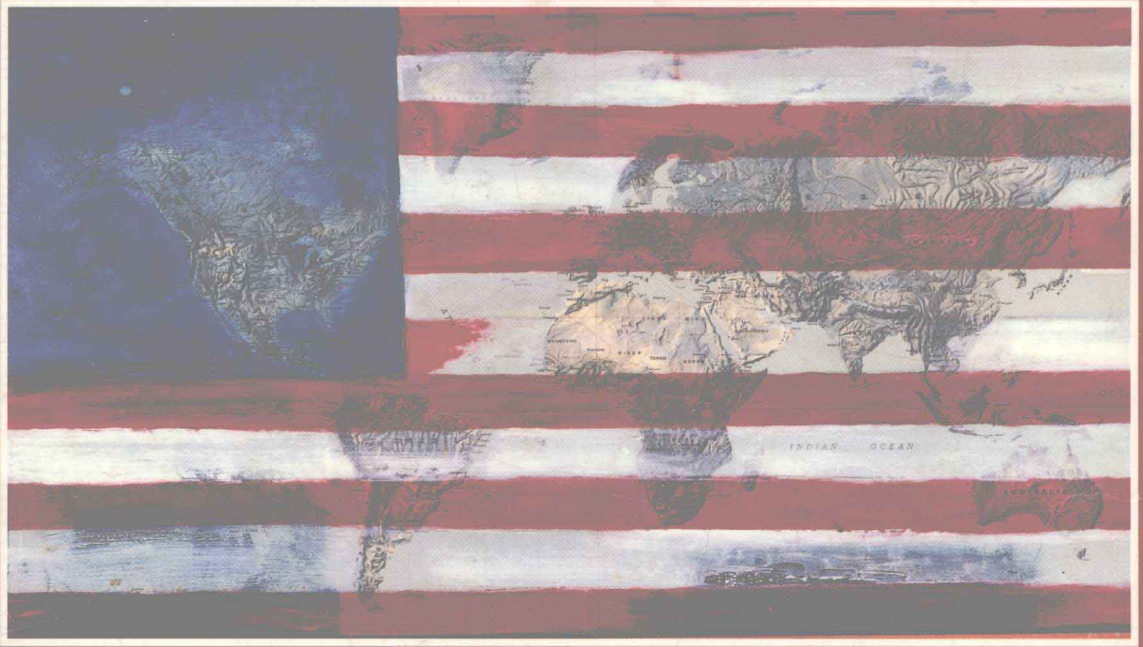


American Voices



Unfinished Flag of the United States
Lawrence Ferlinghetti

Multicultural Literacy and Critical Thinking

SECOND EDITION

Dolores laGuardia

Hans P. 

AMERICAN VOICES

Multicultural Literacy and Critical Thinking

SECOND EDITION

DOLORES LAGUARDIA

University of San Francisco

HANS P. GUTH

Santa Clara University



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To our children

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TO THE INSTRUCTOR

American Voices is a textbook for the courses in writing and critical thinking that are at the core of the student's general education. We aim at helping students become alert readers, more purposeful and effective writers, and thinking members of the larger community. We focus on issues that define our multicultural society as it charts its future. The book is built around selections by committed writers who demonstrate the power of the written word to record, interpret, and change the social and cultural reality in which we live.

The Goals of *American Voices*

▪ **REDEFINING AMERICA** This book is part of the search for a new multicultural definition of American society. The text explores the promise of a multicultural America, examining the issues that confront us on the way to a richer pluralistic meeting of majority and minority cultures. A major theme of the book is diversity and community—the challenge of honoring diversity while searching for the common center.

▪ **TEACHING CRITICAL THINKING** Instruction in critical thinking aims at validating the students' independent judgment. The goal is to develop our students' ability to reexamine familiar ideas, to take a serious look at issues, and to make up their own minds. Critical thinking requires the willingness to confront opposing views or play off differing perspectives on major issues. The readings in this text invite students to participate in the dialogue, introducing them to the dialectic of pro and con. On politically sensitive topics, we try to guard against presenting the textbook authors' views as the approved or correct slant on an issue.

▪ **EXPLORING TODAY'S ISSUES** The book is organized around major concerns in our changing social and cultural awareness. In each chapter, readings cluster around a central theme:

- 1 INITIATION—sharing in diverse patterns of growing up American
- 2 THIS LAND—exploring the varied settings of American lives
- 3 NEW WORLD—reassessing the immigrant experience
- 4 CONTESTED HISTORY—rereading our contested history
- 5 OUTSIDERS—hearing the unheard voices
- 6 IDENTITY—relating gender and race to the search for identity
- 7 MEDIA WATCH—watching the media mold our perception of reality

- 8 ROLE MODELS—searching for heroes
- 9 LANGUAGE—probing how language shapes our world
- 10 VIOLENCE—thinking about living at risk in a violent society
- 11 ENVIRONMENT—reexamining our relationship with nature
- 12 UNCERTAIN FUTURE—envisioning utopian and dystopian tomorrows

▪ **FOSTERING STUDENT PARTICIPATION** The apparatus in *American Voices* is designed to promote students' involvement in their reading and to provoke classroom interaction. Headnotes go beyond routine biography to highlight an author's experience and commitment. **Thought Starters** focus students' attention and activate what they bring to a selection. The after-selection apparatus validates the range of reader response by asking questions that do not have a single correct answer. Questions labeled **The Responsive Reader** direct attention to key points. Questions and suggested topics labeled **Talking, Listening, Writing** encourage students to formulate their own personal reactions and to engage in a dialogue with their classmates, often in preparation for both informal and more structured writing assignments. **Projects** for group work encourage collaborative learning.

▪ **INTEGRATING READING AND WRITING** We help teachers move from experience to exposition, providing the bridge from personal-experience writing to more academic, more public forms of discourse. A writing workshop follows each chapter, with guidelines and activities in each workshop focused on a major writing or thinking strategy. The emphasis is on the learning, thinking, and shaping that are at the heart of the writing process. The text provides a range of imaginative writing assignments, including journal writing, papers based on interviews, letters-to-the-editor, investigative papers, and collaborative writing projects. A rich sampling of student papers helps instructors bridge the gap between professional and student writing and encourages students to find their own voices, to trust their own authority as witnesses and thoughtful observers.

▪ **INTEGRATING THEMATIC AND RHETORICAL CONCERNS** We have correlated issues-oriented readings with the concerns of a writing course. The writing workshop following each chapter focuses on an aspect of critical thinking or on a writing strategy for which the chapter can provide models and materials. An alternative rhetorical table of contents enables instructors to shift from a thematic, issues-oriented emphasis to an emphasis on rhetorical strategies. The writing workshops are self-contained—they may be assigned as needed to suit the sequence of writing assignments in a particular course.

▪ **RECOGNIZING THE IMAGINATIVE DIMENSION** In *American Voices*, imaginative literature enriches and dramatizes major themes.

Typically, the essays in each chapter are followed by a poem and a short story or a one-act play. The book encourages students to think of expository and imaginative writing as parts of a continuum, with passion and imagination playing a role in both nonfiction and fiction, in both prose and poetry.

Note: Chapters, selections, and workshops are self-contained and may be rearranged to suit the objectives or needs of different classes.

Features of the Second Edition

The second edition builds on features that have appealed to teachers and students and that set *American Voices* apart from competitors:

HONORING DIVERSITY Readers of the first edition of *American Voices* responded to its selection of authentic American voices representing a “wide and challenging variety of ways to be human and to perceive the world.” Almost half of the writers in the new edition are from minority backgrounds. Half of the writers are women.

COVERING CURRENT ISSUES *American Voices* features thought-provoking, discussion-generating writing about current issues. The twenty-five new selections in the second edition focus on topics including parental neglect (Susan J. Miller, “My Father’s Other Life”), three-strikes-and-you’re-out laws (Wendy Kaminer, “Federal Offense”), Generation X (Jenny Lyn Bader, “Larger Than Life”), the cult of violence (Shann Nix, “O. J. Mania: American Tragedy”), gender balance in the media (Naomi Wolf, “Are Opinions Male?”), and the black middle class (David Bernstein, “Mixed like Me”).

BALANCED REPRESENTATION In the words of one reviewer, many of “the writings in *American Voices* are by women who happen to be writers as opposed to writers whose profession it is to be ‘women’ for their readers.” On the other hand, to help instructors anticipate the concerns of defensive white males, the second edition adds writers like Daniel J. Boorstin on the positives in American history (“Why I Am Optimistic about America”), Carl Bernstein on journalistic standards (“The Idiot Culture”), and Robert Bly on the search for male role models for the nineties (“The Community of Men”).

EMPOWERING THE STUDENT Reviewers have praised *American Voices* for respecting the students’ independent judgment and honoring the political as well as the ethnic or cultural diversity of this country. The aim is to develop the students’ capacity for critical thinking—not to make them conform to the commitments of their textbook authors.

STRENGTHENED KEY CHAPTERS Several key chapters have been extensively reworked in response to teachers’ classroom experience:

- The “Media Watch” chapter has new materials on trash journalism, film documentaries, and the world of soap opera.
- The revised chapter on “Role Models” has a stronger theoretical perspective with Jenny Lyn Bader and Shann Nix on the search for heroes and Robert Bly on the search for a new masculine ideal beyond the macho fifties male and the soft sixties male.
- As yesterday’s tomorrow becomes today, new voices look at current trends and project them into the future. The concluding chapter on the “Uncertain Future” examines harbingers of what lies ahead: the way e-mail and electronic networking are changing communication styles, disturbing signs of reviving racism among the young, the conservative backlash against multiculturalism and political correctness, and contested future directions of the women’s movement.

TEACHING WRITING *American Voices* has appealed to teachers who want to expose students “to numerous voices and new information” while at the same time doing “a good job of teaching writing.” Realignment of key chapters involves the students earlier in the play of pro and con—challenging them, in the words of one group of student editors, “to think about controversial issues objectively.” New lively and provocative student papers deal with the trauma of the divided family, discrimination within and among minorities, and the deleterious effects of the “beauty myth” on young women’s self-esteem.

Acknowledgments

It has been a privilege to work on this revision with the dedicated professionals at Mayfield Publishing. We owe a special debt to colleagues in the writing movement who have made the core courses in general education more responsive to the needs of today’s students and of a society facing the challenges of an uncertain future. We have taken to heart excellent advice from our reviewers: Marlene S. Bosanko, Tacoma Community College; Mary Chen-Johnson, Tacoma Community College; Robert F. Durante, Canisius College; William Giczkowski, University of San Francisco; Nancy Hayward, Indiana University of Pennsylvania; Zita Ingham, Arkansas State University; Frances Leonard, West Los Angeles College; Scott A. Leonard, Youngstown State University; D. Matthew Ramsey, Ohio State University; Arthur G. Ritas, Macomb Community College; Dr. Mary C. Robertson, LaSalle University; Richard E. Rosol, Central Connecticut State University; Brenda Serotte, Lehman College, CUNY; Claudia Matherly Stolz, Miami University; Molly Travis, Tulane University; Anthony T. Vaver, Tufts University; Mark Wiley, California State University, Long Beach. Above all, we have learned much from our

students. Often, struggling against odds, they have maintained their faith in American education. Their candid and intelligent questions have made us think. Their earnestness and idealism have been a marvelous antidote to cynicism, burnout, and backlash politics.

Dolores laGuardia
Hans P. Guth

TO THE STUDENT

In reality, society and the individual are not antagonists. Culture provides the raw material of which individuals make their lives. If it is meager, the individual suffers. If it is rich, the individual has a chance to rise to the opportunity.

Ruth Benedict

This book asks you to read, think, and write about who you are as an individual and as part of a nation. What makes each of us the people we are? Where do we come from, and where are we headed? What shapes our thinking, our goals, our loyalties? The readings in this book invite you to think about how your sense of self is shaped by sometimes conflicting influences. Your identity as a person is likely to have been influenced by family background, gender, ethnic or national origin, religious ties, racial identity, sexual preference, or social status. Working with this book, you will have a chance to think about what you have in common with others, about shared experiences and commitments. You will have a chance to think about what *separates* you from others. How real are the barriers that divide us?

Traditionally, Americans have prided themselves on being independent individuals, making their own choices. We each have the right to be our “own person”—not just a cog in the machine or a number in the college computer. As Americans, we have the right to say “No.” We have the right to talk back to government officials, elders in the family, peer groups at school or college, preachers, teachers, advocates of causes, or whoever wants to tell us what we should think and do. Nevertheless, the choices we make are shaped by the culture in which we live. We have the option of conforming to the traditional lifestyles of our families—urban or rural, strict or permissive, politically liberal or conservative. We choose to adapt or reject our native or immigrant heritage, staying close to or distancing ourselves from a Southern or Mexican or Irish or Italian past. We each in our own way come to terms with our inherited religious faiths—Catholic, Baptist, Mormon, Jewish, Buddhist, or other.

A culture is a traditional way of living, of thinking and feeling. A culture, for better or for worse, provides traditional answers to basic questions: How important am I as an individual compared with the survival of society? What are my obligations to family—to parents, to siblings, to relatives in need? What jobs are open to me—to someone of my family background, gender, or social status? How am I expected to love, court,

marry, have children? Is it all right to divorce? to have an abortion? What is valued in my culture? Who is judged successful and why? Who is considered beautiful and why? What is considered sinful, offensive, taboo?

In these and similar matters, many people adapt to their own needs the traditions of family, neighborhood, or church. Many swim in a traditional lifestyle the way fish swim in the sea. For many others, however, growing up means deciding to move on, to reach their own personal declaration of independence. They find themselves reexamining their roots, their assumptions, their loyalties. They reach a point in their lives where they have to decide: Should they work in the family's hardware store or go to college? Should they convert to Catholicism? Should they marry one of their own kind or someone from a different background or religion? Should they follow in the footsteps of their mother or father—or should they enter a profession where people of their gender, their skin color, or their ethnic background are still a rarity?

American culture is not a single monolithic culture where everybody has to think, talk, and act the same. A commuter might start the day in a mainly Spanish-speaking Texas country town and drive through white suburbs to a predominantly black downtown, interspersed with areas with shop signs in Chinese or Vietnamese. America is a multicultural society, with many traditions clashing at times and at other times blending in a rich new synthesis. Many of its citizens are now, as many have always been in the past, bilingual. Many Americans have always used another language or a down-home dialect in their families or neighborhoods, in addition to the standard American English of school, city hall, and office.

Americans do not all have names like Harriman or Saltonstall. The *Mayflower*, bringing dissident English Puritans to New England, was a small boat. Many Americans are descended from orthodox Jews, from freed slaves, from exploited Irish peasants driven off their land by famine. Others are descended from displaced persons—Ukrainians, Poles, Lithuanians—uprooted by Hitler's war machine. Many Americans trace their ancestry to the refugees of failed revolutions (Germany in 1848; Hungary in the first stirrings of revolt against Stalinism after World War II). Many (perhaps two million or more) trace their ancestry at least in part to Native Americans living on the fringes of the white society that drove them from their land. Many Americans have Mexican ancestors who lived in the Southwest before the gringos came or who came across the border in search of work. Other Americans are descended from Puerto Ricans, or from Chinese laborers who built the railroads of the West, or from Japanese families who were taken to relocation camps in the desert during World War II.

As our country approaches the twenty-first century, Americans face fateful questions: Are the forces that divide us becoming stronger? Will racial strife make us a nation divided into hostile armed camps? Are traditional class distinctions—layers of wealth and privilege—resurfacing that many immigrants had left behind? Will the widening gulf between the rich

and the poor make us “two nations”? Or can we achieve a richer new synthesis? What would it take to achieve a true pluralism? Can we envision a pluralistic society that values the contributions of many cultural strands, with people of different ties and backgrounds respecting and learning from one another?

ABOUT THE EDITORS

Dolores laGuardia teaches at University of San Francisco, where she developed a humanities sequence titled "American Voices: Ourselves and Each Other," with courses focused on African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, religious minorities, and alternative lifestyles. She has served as the writing specialist for a large federal grant designed to improve writing instruction at the community college level. On several visits to the former Soviet Union, she has participated in programs for Russian educators, including workshops on computer education at the prestigious Troitsk Institute outside Moscow. In the summer of 1994, she was a presenter at a workshop on multiculturalism at an international conference held at Oxford University.

Hans P. Guth (Santa Clara University) has worked with writing teachers and spoken at professional meetings in most of the fifty states. He is co-author of *Discovering Literature* (Blair Press, 1993) and the author of numerous composition texts, including *The Writer's Agenda*, *Student Voices*, and *New English Handbook*. He has been for many years co-director and program chair of the Young Rhetoricians' Conference in Monterey, California. In 1994, Guth and laGuardia published *American Visions: Multicultural Literature for Writers*, a rereading of American literature from a multicultural perspective.

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