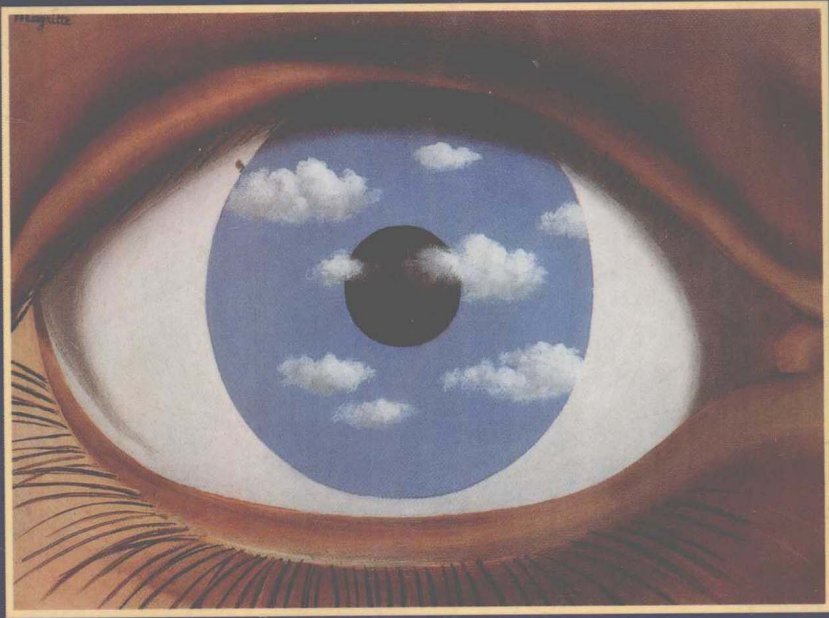


# Literature

## The Human Experience



s i x t h   e d i t i o n

edited by

Abcarian / Marvin Klotz

**SIXTH EDITION**

# **LITERATURE**

## **THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE**

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*To Joan and Debra*

*Love:* a word properly applied to our delight in particular kinds of food; sometimes metaphorically spoken of the favorite objects of all our appetites.

Henry Fielding

# PREFACE

And wisdom is a butterfly  
And not a gloomy bird of prey.

W. B. Yeats

The short stories, poems, and plays in this sixth edition of *Literature: The Human Experience* represent literary traditions ranging from 400 B.C. to the present and reflect diverse cultural and ethnic experiences. We have arranged the works into four thematic groups—Innocence and Experience, Conformity and Rebellion, Love and Hate, and The Presence of Death. Each section is introduced by a short essay of general observations on the theme. Within each thematic section, the works are grouped by genre—fiction, poetry, drama—and arranged chronologically by the author's birth date. Each work is dated to indicate the date of composition or earliest appearance. We have not attempted to date traditional ballads.

Study questions and writing topics follow about half the stories and poems, all the plays, and each thematic section. These questions are designed to help students focus on the works' thematic and stylistic elements, and often invite the students to find, in the work they read, connections to their own lives.

The first of several appendices, "Poems about Poetry," offers some verse meditations by poets on what poetry is and why it is written. These poems reveal diverse motives and aims, as well as the difficulty even poets have in describing exactly what it is they do.

The next three appendices, "Reading Fiction," "Reading Poetry," and "Reading Drama," acquaint students with some formal concepts and historical considerations basic to the study of literature. These are general introductions that instructors will no doubt want to augment as they discuss the formal sources of readers' pleasure or, for that matter, boredom.

A "Glossary of Critical Approaches" is new to this edition. Since the publication of the first edition of this anthology some twenty years ago, the so-called New Criticism, with its unyielding emphasis on formalism, has been dethroned by a wide variety of competing critical approaches. Whatever else one might say about this development, it has certainly had the important and salutary effect of broadening and deepening the range of discourse about literature. For example, feminist criticism, like Marxism before it, has insisted on the connections between literature and the larger world of power and politics. Deconstructionism, by calling our attention to the instability and contradictoriness of language, has challenged the view that great literary works embody a consciously

designed seamless web of interrelated parts. Reader-response criticism celebrates the reader by arguing that, in any meaningful sense, a literary text only comes into being when a particular reader confronts a particular work. Finally, the new historical criticism contends that knowledge of historical context is as important as any other kind of knowledge in understanding a literary work. The “Glossary of Critical Approaches” attempts to explain the basic assumptions of these various schools of critical practice. We hope that from what may seem a bewildering and even confusing array of approaches, students will at least learn that there is not some “correct” way to approach a literary work and, further, that many of the approaches complement one another.

“Writing about Literature” outlines a number of writing strategies ranging from the free writing of a student’s journal through discussions of more formal explication, analysis, and comparison-and-contrast essay assignments. We provide several samples of student writing to guide students in the preparation of their own papers. “Suggested Topics for Writing” offers instructors over eighty focused writing assignments. The appendix concludes with a section illustrating manuscript mechanics based on the *MLA Handbook*.

The appendix “Biographical Notes on the Authors” provides students with information about some of the major events, biographical and literary, in the career of each author. We hope these notes will not only satisfy students’ natural curiosity about writers’ lives but will also, from time to time, stimulate them enough to want to learn more.

A “Glossary of Literary Terms,” with brief excerpts to illustrate the definitions, concludes the text.

We preserve, of course, the major writers in the Western dramatic tradition—Sophocles, Shakespeare, Ibsen—and retain Susan Glaspell, Bruce Jay Friedman, Imamu Amiri Baraka, and Woody Allen. As well, we are restoring George Bernard Shaw’s pungent examination of conventional morality, *Major Barbara*. In each thematic section, however, we have added a new play. Since the feminist perspective is represented in many other works in the anthology, we have replaced Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* with the same author’s *An Enemy of the People*, a play strikingly modern in its examination of the political corruption and moral cowardice that occur when the public health and private gain conflict. In *M. Butterfly*, David Henry Hwang draws on an actual historical event to create an extraordinary drama of sexual intrigue in the context of power politics and cross-cultural confusion. Pam Gems’s *Loving Women* examines the conflict in male/female relationships between modern, liberal enlightenment and traditional roles while Harvey Fierstein’s *Widows and Children First!* examines the sorrows and triumphs of a gay protagonist who wants, essentially, what everyone wants—a nurturing and loving family. We have also added *No Exit*, Jean-Paul Sartre’s classic play about three people who review their lives from a room in hell, condemned to eternally torment one another. Finally, we have added Art Spiegelman’s powerful comic strip on the tragic suicide of his mother, who killed herself more than twenty years after she was freed from a Nazi concentration camp.

Among the other new selections are works by Robert Olen Butler, Elizabeth Brewster, Marianne Burke, Raymond Carver, Kate Daniels, Louise Erdrich, James Fenton, Tess Gallagher, Molly Giles, Dana Gioia, Nadine Gordimer, Barry Hannah, Amy Hempel, William Heyen, Edward Hirsch, Linda Hogan, Pam Houston, David Leavitt, Duane Locke, Felix Mnthali, Bharati Mukherjee, Kathleen Norris, Molly Peacock, Alberto Ríos, Gjertrud Schnackenberg, and Kathleen Weigner.

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Richard Abcarian  
Marvin Klotz



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