

THE HARVEST READER



William A. Heffernan

THE HARVEST READER

William A. Heffernan

Saddleback College



HARCOURT BRACE JOVANOVIICH, PUBLISHERS

San Diego New York Chicago Atlanta Washington, D.C.

London Sydney Toronto

Cover credit: © Image Bank West/Nicholas Foster

Copyright © 1984 by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Requests for permission to make copies of any part of the work should be mailed to: Permissions, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, Orlando, Florida 32887.

ISBN: 0-15-535250-4

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 83-82441

Printed in the United States of America

Copyrights and Acknowledgments:

PUERTO VALLARTA, MEXICO Excerpted selection from *The Diary of Anaïs Nin*, Volume Seven, © 1980 by Rupert Pole as trustee under the Last Will and Testament of Anaïs Nin. Reprinted by permission of Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.

NOTEBOOKS, 1962/63 From "Rose and Percy B" in *Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams* by Sylvia Plath. Copyright © 1961, 1962 by Sylvia Plath. Reprinted by permission of Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THE HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL Excerpts from *The Gospel According to the Harvard Business School* by Peter Cohen. Copyright © 1973 by Peter Cohen. Reprinted by permission of Doubleday & Company, Inc.

JULIA From *Pentimento* by Lillian Hellman. Copyright © 1973 by Lillian Hellman. By permission of Little, Brown and Company.

FIRST COMMUNION From *Family Installments* by Edward Rivera. Copyright © 1982 by Edward Rivera. By permission of William Morrow & Company.

CONFESSIONS OF A BLUE-CHIP BLACK From *A Man's Life* by Roger Wilkins. Copyright © 1982 by Roger Wilkins. Reprinted by permission of Simon & Schuster, a Division of Gulf & Western Corporation. This article first appeared in *Harper's*, April 1982.

Credits and acknowledgments continue on pages 569-72, which constitute a continuation of the copyright page.

For my children, and my grandson, Christopher Ryan

To the Student

There was nothing very noteworthy about the fact that my Scots grandfather was a master carpenter by profession, or that he had single-handedly built the house where I grew up. But, in our family at least, two of his accomplishments gave him notoriety. He played the fiddle—and he read books.

Grandfather had no formal musical training. He had taught himself. And on sleet-gray winter afternoons when it seemed the New York streetlights winked on an hour before either God or the Consolidated Edison Company had intended, my grandfather would play the fiddle. We could hear him in the dormered attic of his private quarters, scraping his bow, singing some old Scots song no one else had troubled to remember, while three stories below the dining room chandelier danced to the rhythm of his foot tapping out the beat of the tune.

Grandfather's reading was even more remarkable. In Scotland his formal education had ended with the third grade. Yet his rooms in our New York house were filled with musty books no one else in my family had ever heard of, much less read. To me their odor, the brownish yellow of their pages was as dangerous and tempting as a jackknife or a book of matches. Later, I got as far as reading the spines: Macaulay's *History*, Thoreau's *Walden*, Hughes' *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, Collins' *The Moonstone* (which held a strange fascination for me, though I wasn't sure why, or even what it meant).

Grandfather aside, reading was viewed with great suspicion by other members of my family—probably because it seemed less an activity than a pastime. Grandfather's appetite for books was, from the family's point of view, not merely unproductive—it was downright subversive. Sunday dinners always seemed to erupt in heated arguments between my grandfather and my father. Usually these disagreements involved politics or government, but any topic—even toilet paper once—would do. Always my parents left me with the impression that Grandfather's ideas were "strange." Certainly his opinions were far different from what I heard from my friends or their parents or what I learned at parochial school. Above all, I was left with the impression—the insinuation, really—that Grandfather's "strange" notions were the effects of his unconventional reading. It took me years—years stretching all the way to college—to find confirmation of what he said. Unfortunately, Grandfather died before discovering that I too had begun to read, before finding

that someone much younger than he had been listening attentively to that strange music from upstairs.

The point of this reminiscence is that my grandfather did not earn his living from reading, yet he read without pause decade after decade until his death. Why? Each year, I'm reminded of my grandfather when a new student asks, "Why should I read this? I'm going to be a computer programmer (or an accountant, or a chemist)." I never asked my grandfather why he read, but now I think I know the reason. I believe he would have said, "How else can a poor fellow from the slums of Glasgow find out about things?" By "things," I think he would have meant more than facts; he would have meant some of those "subversive" ideas, different ways of looking at the world, that neither his environment (Scotland of the 1880s) nor mine (New York of the 1950s) would ever have provided had we not been interested in reading.

So, one reason for reading a book is to free yourself from the limitations of your surroundings, not only in the sense of escaping (there is nothing wrong with reading for entertainment and escape), but in the sense of finding yourself, growing through exposure to new ideas, different ways of considering old ideas or seeing their renewed importance. A philosopher once observed that if at the end of your college years you hold exactly the ideas you began with, "You've been indoctrinated; you've not been educated."

I didn't know my grandfather as a carpenter; I knew him best as a human being who had eccentric ideas and who, when he wasn't living at home, lived on a small farm in upstate New York. While there he wrote long, amusing letters that sometimes overflowed onto the margins of the paper when he was carried away with a description of one of the trials of his self-sufficient life. Grandfather's letters were lively and conversational—very much like the way he talked. And his letters too were full of interesting and controversial information—just as though he were standing there trying and testing his ideas against the prejudices and suppositions of his readers.

Although writing is harder (and slower) than reading—after all, carrying on an intelligent conversation is more taxing than merely listening and being entertained by it—there is great pleasure to be had in the play of words and in the crafting of ideas to express what you mean. Sometimes I wonder if Grandfather got as much pleasure writing those letters as he did building the house that sheltered his family for over half a century. Then I recall Grandfather during one of those clamorous Sunday dinners, or I remember his letters, and I'm inclined to believe he got at least as much pleasure from

reading and writing as from his carpentry. At 75, still proud of his carpentry, he put another dormer in the attic. Today, none of his family lives in that house; yet, his annotated copy of *Walden* survives. So does the memory of his ideas and letters.

To the Instructor

The organization of *The Harvest Reader* resembles the order in which writing is actually done. The book begins with diaries and journals that illustrate the search for ideas in an associative context—a free flow of thoughts, uninhibited by rules of usage or problems of organization. Professional writers record their experiences for later use in diaries and journals. Because beginning writers, too, may use diaries and journals as a continuing source of ideas, I urge students to keep a journal as a source-book for writing assignments. Selections from diaries, journals, and autobiographies reveal, furthermore, that personal experience is the starting point for most writing; unless the topic flows from the actual experience of the writer, the result is likely to be a dismal forced effort—rewarding neither to writer nor to reader.

Narrative and descriptive writing are presented next, because they, too, often grow out of personal experience, and because the problems of organization and concreteness are easier to solve here than in other types of writing. Writing description and narration is generally easier than writing exposition or persuasion because the subjects fall within the range of the writer's direct experience. Somewhat more sophisticated are the abstractions of exposition and the complex problems of organization inherent in the need to explain something or to explore an idea. Finally, and most sophisticated of all, is the ability to persuade, to discover the means of convincing an audience.

In many other texts, the framework of the text exercises primary sway over the selections; in this book, pieces were chosen first because of their intrinsic excellence, and second because of their appropriateness to the pattern of the text. Although a few selections appear in other anthologies, I have avoided pieces that are routinely reprinted in freshman anthologies. All selections are contemporary, since the book aims to provide recent models of style and thought. A number of selections deal with themes or issues raised by other selections. These echoes and reverberations are intended to stim-

ulate critical thought on important issues that will, in turn, generate thoughtful student writing. Another significant feature of the book is that several authors are represented more than once. Several selections by the same author allow the beginning writer to examine how technique is purposely altered from one essay to another. The assumption underlying this reader is that students learn much about writing from reading and through imitation. Successful imitation requires a sufficient sampling of works by an author for observation and analysis.

In the exposition section of this book, the selections are organized according to the traditional patterns of expository prose (definition, example, cause-effect, and so on), not because writers begin with an empty pattern of organization and then fill in the form, but because these patterns are useful descendants of Aristotelian topics, mental categories that help the writer think about the subject. It is an artificial exercise to ask someone to write a definition essay (a pure example seldom exists), but the exercise does help illustrate the organic nature of writing. A single sentence explaining the cause of something can grow into a whole paragraph of development. For writers who struggle to find words and sentences to say what they know, sometimes it is a blessing to be given a ready-made form, even an artificial one. The antidote to this over-simplification is a closer scrutiny of the essays classified under a single rubric, or the deliberate inclusion of essays which amply demonstrate mixed modes. Both antidotes are here.

The questions and writing assignments that follow each selection are closely tied to the text of the essays. The questions expose underlying techniques of development, style, and organization. The sole focus of inquiry and commentary is writing, not intellectual discussion, however significant some of the issues might be. A composition course that focuses on issues without helping students to become better writers fails in an important way, but so does one that presents technique without showing students how to express ideas about issues that affect them and their fellow citizens.

Every book is a collaborative effort. While I accept responsibility for any shortcomings of this book, I would like to acknowledge the valuable contributions made by friends and colleagues whose names do not appear on the cover. I especially thank the members of the rhetoric and composition seminar at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln—particularly Dudley Bailey, its director—and the National Endowment for the Humanities, which sponsored the seminar. For their research assistance, I am grateful to E. Ann Hagerty, Tom Weisrock, and the librarians at the University of Nebraska and Sad-

dleback College. I also appreciate the editorial teamwork of the Harcourt Brace Jovanovich staff: Jack W. Thomas, my manuscript editor, without whose good taste and assistance much of what is valuable would not be here, and Paul H. Nockleby, my acquisitions editor, who guided the book through a maze of changes, and whose encouragement, good advice, and suggestions rescued me from several cul de sacs. Finally, I thank my wife, Debbie, who listened and read through bitter Nebraska blizzards and hot California simooms: "Pacience is an heigh vertu, certeyn."

William A. Heffernan
Saddleback College

Introduction

Whether you plan to become an accountant or a chemist, a machinist or a zoologist, you need to know how to write. Writing skills—not just the pragmatic variety necessary for letter or memo writing, but the finer kinds that involve organizing complex ideas or convincing an audience outside your chosen specialty—are demanded in virtually every profession. A college course in writing can help you master both kinds.

This book, *The Harvest Reader*, can help you become a better writer in several ways. First, the book can be used as a collection of model essays to analyze and imitate. Second, *The Harvest Reader* can be used as a rhetoric, a book of advice—with illustrations—about the composing process from the blank sheet to the finished paper: how writers get ideas (invention), how they organize their materials (disposition), and the sort of expression they choose (elocution or style).

Imitation is one of the oldest ways to learn a skill (which is, after all, what you are learning in a composition class—the skill of writing); there is no specific body of knowledge, as in history or science, on which you will be tested. Like other kinds of skills—hitting a tennis ball accurately, performing effective surgery—you will be judged on how well you perform. One way of learning how to perform well is to watch a master of the skill in the act, and try to imitate what is successful about the performance. This book offers you a collection of successful performances, with commentary on why they are successful so you can more easily see what is worth imitating. In order to give you a second, or even a third look at a successful performance—a kind of replay—there are occasionally two selections by the same author so you can see what techniques are carried over from situation to situation, and what techniques are adapted to new conditions. For example, George Orwell, engaged in a controversy about the kind of science education that should take place in the public schools, writes one way for a daily paper,

but quite another way when he narrates witnessing a public execution in a piece against capital punishment intended for book publication. You can also examine how different writers perform when handling the same subject. For example, how do E. B. White and Gay Talese view the crowding and excitement of New York? What do Margaret Mead and Joan Didion think of women's struggles to achieve parity in employment? What do Marie Winn and Sally Helgesen think of the way mass media influences our attitudes? In other words, the way a writer handles a subject is as personal and unique as the performance of a skilled athlete.

Along with imitating the models, you can benefit from advice concerning the procedures used by skillful writers. Each section of the book begins with a brief introductory discussion concerning the particular techniques required to produce a paper of the sort exemplified by the selections. The characteristics of the form—narration, description, exposition, persuasion—are explained and illustrated, first within the introduction, then with a short example, and finally with several selections. Following each selection are questions intended to help you analyze the organization, content, and technique. (Successful imitation and analysis of what makes a successful performance are inseparable.) After you have mastered several types of writing, you will find it advantageous to combine the techniques of one form with those of another. Several sections of this book lead you toward that goal.

Finally, the book is organized to lead you logically from easier to more difficult types of writing. You will undoubtedly find writing about personal experiences and concrete tangible things easier to follow and interpret than writing about abstractions or social, political, and ethical issues. In general, personal interest is the starting point for most successful writing. The book, like successful writing, begins with the concrete and personal—diaries and journals, autobiographies, narrations, descriptions—and ends with the abstract and intellectual—exposition and persuasion.

Skillful writing is a cumulative process. The beginner naturally feels self-conscious and awkward in taking the first faltering steps toward mastering the skill. It's easy to be awed, perhaps even frightened, by someone else's mastery of a skill. Everyone is afraid of looking foolish in comparison with demonstrated mastery. But, like learning other skills, learning one part of the skill of writing makes

mastery of the next part of the skill a bit easier; one success leads to other successes, which in turn lead to the loss of self consciousness that comes with the fear of looking foolish. The models in this book, and the advice that accompanies them, are intended to increase your cumulative skill in writing so that you can not only admire the mastery of others without self-conscious fear of comparison, but you may also, at times, demonstrate some of that mastery yourself.

Table of Contents

	To the Student	vii
	To the Instructor	ix
	Introduction	xxi
PART 1	JOURNALS AND DIARIES: WRITING FOR SELF-EXPRESSION	1
	Short Example: Lewis Mumford, "Random Notes"	7
	Anaïs Nin, "Puerto Vallarta, Mexico"	8
	Sylvia Plath, "Notebooks, 1962/63"	12
	Peter Cohen, "The Gospel According to the Harvard Business School"	17
PART 2	AUTOBIOGRAPHY: WRITING FROM PERSONAL EXPERIENCE	25
	Short Example: Truman Capote, "A Voice from a Cloud"	29
	Lillian Hellman, "Julia"	31
	Edward Rivera, "First Communion"	36
	Roger Wilkins, "Confessions of a Blue-Chip Black"	48
	Edward Hoagland, "City Rat"	59
	Thomas McGuane, "Me and My Bike and Why"	66
PART 3	NARRATION: WRITING TO RECREATE EVENTS	75
	Short Example: James Thurber, "The Rabbits Who Caused All the Trouble"	81
	S. J. Perelman, "Misty Behind the Curtain"	83
	E. B. White, "The Geese"	97
	George Orwell, "A Hanging"	105
PART 4	DESCRIPTION: WRITING TO RECREATE PERSONS AND PLACES	113
	Short Example: Gore Vidal, "President John F. Kennedy"	123
	Truman Capote, "Marlon Brando"	124
	Tom Wolfe, "John Glenn, Astronaut"	128
	John Updike, "My Grandmother's Thimble"	138
	Short Example: Mary McCarthy, "Lisbon, Portugal"	143
	James Agee, "Shady Grove, Alabama, July 1936"	145
	Peter Matthiessen, "Delano, California"	149

PART 5 MIXED NARRATION AND DESCRIPTION	157
Short Example: Mark Kramer, "The Ruination of the Tomato"	161
Gretel Ehrlich, "Wyoming: The Solace of Open Spaces"	163
Paul Theroux, "The Bullet Train"	174
N. Scott Momaday, "The Way to Rainy Mountain"	179
Tracy Kidder, "The Soul of a New Machine"	186
PART 6 EXPOSITION: WRITING TO EXPLAIN AND INFORM	197
<i>Definition</i>	205
Short Example: Joseph Epstein, "The Virtues of Ambition"	207
John McPhee, "Citrus Sinensis"	209
Aldo Leopold, "Country"	216
George Orwell, "What Is Science?"	218
<i>Examples</i>	223
Short Example: Kevin Starr, "Signs of the Times"	225
Gay Talese, "New York"	226
Ellen Goodman, "The Maidenform Woman Administers Shock Treatment"	234
Garrison Keillor, "How It Was in America a Week Ago Tuesday"	237
Robert Coles, "The Streets"	245
<i>Division/Classification</i>	254
Short Example: Edward Abbey, "The Great American Desert"	256
Susan Allen Toth, "Cinematypes"	257
Alexander Theroux, "Matters of Taste"	260
Freeman Dyson, "Extraterrestrials"	268
<i>Cause-Effect</i>	274
Short Example: Milton Moskowitz, Michael Katz, Robert Levering, "Why Levi's Changed the 501"	276
Don Sharp, "Under the Hood"	278
Lester Thurow, "An Economy that No Longer Performs"	287
Sally Helgesen, "The Man in the Movies"	294
Barry Commoner, "Nuclear Fire"	301
<i>Comparison/Contrast</i>	315
Short Example: Carson McCullers, "The Lover and the Beloved"	319
Joan Didion, "Many Mansions"	321
David Osborne, "Rich Doctors, Poor Nurses"	326
Margaret Mead, "To Both Their Own"	334

<i>Analogy</i>	350
Short Example: E. B. White, "Here Is New York"	352
Walker Percy, "Southern Comfort"	353
Wendell Berry, "The Likenesses of Atonement (At-one-ment)"	358
<i>Process Analysis</i>	363
Short Example: Tracy Kidder, "The Future of the Photovoltaic Cell"	367
Michael Lenehan, "The Quality of the Instrument"	368
Lewis Thomas, "How We Process Information"	377
PART 7 MIXED PATTERNS OF EXPOSITION	383
Short Example: Loren Eiseley, "How Flowers Changed the World"	388
Calvin Trillin, "Hong Kong Dream"	391
Robert M. Pirsig, "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance"	399
Norman Cousins, "The Mysterious Placebo"	403
George V. Higgins, "Clumsy Oafs, Unlettered Louts"	411
John McPhee, "Pieces of the Frame"	418
Peter Marin, "Coming to Terms with Vietnam"	431
PART 8 PERSUASION: WRITING TO CONVINCE	451
Short Example: Hans Bethe, "The Nuclear Freeze"	457
Stan Hager, "In the Logging Woods"	459
Edward Abbey, "Polemic: Industrial Tourism and the National Parks"	472
Marie Winn, "Television and Violence: A New Approach"	483
Joan Didion, "The Women's Movement"	494
James Fallows, "The Draft: Why the Country Needs It"	502
Tom Bethell, "Against Bilingual Education"	509
PART 9 STYLE	519
Jimmy Breslin, "A Beautiful Custom"	524
William Saroyan, "Places and People"	527
Annie Dillard, "Teaching a Stone to Talk"	530
Roger Angell, "The Interior Stadium"	537
Loren Eiseley, "Man the Firemaker"	542
John Fowles, "Seeing Nature Whole"	549

Thematic Table of Contents

PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Sylvia Plath, "Notebooks, 1962/63"	12
Lillian Hellman, "Julia"	31
Edward Rivera, "First Communion"	36
Roger Wilkins, "Confessions of a Blue-Chip Black"	48
John Updike, "My Grandmother's Thimble"	138
N. Scott Momaday, "The Way to Rainy Mountain"	179
Susan Allen Toth, "Cinematypes"	257
Carson McCullers, "The Lover and the Beloved"	319
William Saroyan, "Places and People"	527

CITY LIFE

Edward Rivera, "First Communion"	36
Edward Hoagland, "City Rat"	59
Gay Talese, "New York"	226
Robert Coles, "The Streets"	245
E. B. White, "Here Is New York"	352
Jimmy Breslin, "A Beautiful Custom"	524
William Saroyan, "Places and People"	527

COUNTRY LIFE

E. B. White, "The Geese"	97
Mary McCarthy, "Lisbon, Portugal"	143
James Agee, "Shady Grove, Alabama, July 1936"	145
Gretel Ehrlich, "Wyoming: The Solace of Open Spaces"	163
Aldo Leopold, "Country"	216
Edward Abbey, "The Great American Desert"	256
Wendell Berry, "The Likenesses of Atonement (At-one-ment)"	358
Edward Abbey, "Polemic: Industrial Tourism and the National Parks"	472

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Anaïs Nin, "Puerto Vallarta, Mexico"	8
Edward Rivera, "First Communion"	36
Roger Wilkins, "Confessions of a Blue-Chip Black"	48
S. J. Perelman, "Misty Behind the Curtain"	83
Peter Matthiessen, "Delano, California"	149
Paul Theroux, "The Bullet Train"	174
N. Scott Momaday, "The Way to Rainy Mountain"	179
Garrison Keillor, "How It Was in America a Week Ago Tuesday"	237

Robert Coles, "The Streets"	245
Walker Percy, "Southern Comfort"	353
Tom Bethell, "Against Bilingual Education"	509
Jimmy Breslin, "A Beautiful Custom"	524

WORK AND RECREATION

Thomas McGuane, "Me and My Bike and Why"	66
Don Sharp, "Under the Hood"	278
Sally Helgesen, "Man in the Movies"	294
David Osborne, "Rich Doctors, Poor Nurses"	326
Michael Lenehan, "The Quality of the Instrument"	368
Calvin Trillin, "Hong Kong Dream"	391
Stan Hager, "In the Logging Woods"	459
Edward Abbey, "Polemic: Industrial Tourism and the National Parks"	472
Roger Angell, "The Interior Stadium"	537

EDUCATION

Peter Cohen, "The Gospel According to the Harvard Business School"	17
Truman Capote, "A Voice from a Cloud"	29
Edward Rivera, "First Communion"	36
Lewis Thomas, "How We Process Information"	377
George Higgins, "Clumsy Oafs, Unlettered Louts"	411
Tom Bethell, "Against Bilingual Education"	509

THE SEXES

Ellen Goodman, "The Maidenform Woman Administers Shock Treatment"	234
Susan Allen Toth, "Cinematypes"	257
Sally Helgesen, "The Man in the Movies"	294
David Osborne, "Rich Doctors, Poor Nurses"	326
Margaret Mead, "To Both Their Own"	334
Joan Didion, "The Women's Movement"	494

ECONOMICS

James Agee, "Shady Grove, Alabama, July 1936"	145
Robert Coles, "The Streets"	245
Milton Moskowitz, Michael Katz, Robert Levering, "Why Levi's Changed the 501"	276
Lester Thurow, "An Economy that No Longer Performs"	287
David Osborne, "Rich Doctors, Poor Nurses"	326
Margaret Mead, "To Both Their Own"	334
Walker Percy, "Southern Comfort"	353
Stan Hager, "In the Logging Woods"	459