

A large, stylized graphic of the letters 'W' and 'R' dominates the cover. The 'W' is formed by a blue vertical stroke on the left, a green vertical stroke in the middle, and a red vertical stroke on the right. The 'R' is formed by a green vertical stroke on the right and a red vertical stroke on the left. The letters are thick and have a slightly irregular, hand-drawn feel. The background is a light cream color with some texture and minor wear.

**BROOKS  
and  
WARREN**

# **Modern Rhetoric**

**Fourth Edition**

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**Fourth Edition**

**Cleanth Brooks**

**Robert Penn Warren**



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# Modern Rhetoric

Fourth Edition

to David M. Clay

## Preface

In preparing the present edition of *Modern Rhetoric* we have not departed from the principles on which the earlier editions were based, but we have made a number of practical changes that we hope will render the book a more effective teaching instrument for the instructor and a simpler and more useful textbook for the student.

Perhaps the best way to state the principles that we continue to affirm is to repeat a paragraph from the preface to the Shorter Third Edition.

We remain convinced that good writing is a natural expression of necessary modes of thought and not at all a matter of rules or tricks. We remain convinced, too, that the best and quickest way to learn to write well is not through a process of blind absorption, or trial and error, or automatic conditioning, but through the cultivation of an awareness of the underlying logical and psychological principles. We believe that the awareness to be developed involves a double process of constantly analyzing specific examples and constantly trying to write against a background of principle. To put the matter in a slightly different way: the student learns to write by coming to a deeper realization of the workings of his own mind and feelings, and of the way in which those workings are related to language.

As for our practical changes, we have shortened the book somewhat by omitting certain materials, but mostly by tightening up our own comments. This process has involved even main headings and subheadings of chapters, a number of which we have reordered and rewritten in order to give the reader a better notion of the organization of the book and of the movement from idea to idea.

We have striven to keep primary concerns in the foreground by relegating secondary concerns to appendixes. Thus, the more technical aspects of deductive reasoning have been placed in an appendix, where they are available for reference and further study when that is deemed necessary or desirable.

Because writing a critical paper on a literary text raises special problems that go beyond those encountered in most other research papers, our

discussion of works of literature has been assigned its own chapter. Further, instead of providing, as in the preceding edition of this text, one long model paper on a literary subject, we have included five short papers: three on a story, two on a poem. These sample papers (and our discussion of them) deal with some of the common pitfalls encountered by a student who is asked to analyze fiction or poetry.

To conclude this brief account of the special changes we have made in the present edition, we should note that we have revised and enlarged our *Instructor's Manual*. Our manual is not so much an "answer" book as a compendium of suggestions of useful background materials and additional resources, and of further exercises that the instructor may find helpful for classes with special needs or problems. Our hope is that the manual will thus greatly add to the flexibility of our book by pointing out ways to increase, where needed, stress on certain problems of composition and by allowing the instructor to alter the sequence of study.

We should like to repeat here, with a few additions, the acknowledgments previously made to friends of this book. Though these friends are many and all merit our deep gratitude, we wish to make particular mention of Mr. Lloyd Bruno, Mr. L. Morrill Burke of the University of Maine at Portland, Mr. Henry Cassady of Hartnell College, the late Edward Gordon, Mr. Fabian Gudas of Louisiana State University, Ms. Andrea Haight, Miss Mary K. Hill, Mr. Sanford Kahrman, the Reverend Dennis B. McCarthy, O.P., Mr. Ernest Nagel of Columbia University, Mr. Gregory Smith Prince, Mr. George B. Rodman of the University of Wisconsin, Mr. Gerald A. Smith of the State University of New York at Geneseo, Mr. Marinus Swets of Grand Rapids Junior College, Mrs. Mildred Tackett, Mr. Morton A. Tenenbaum of West Los Angeles College, the late Richard M. Weaver, Mr. Rulon Wells, and Mr. Harold Whitehall.

We owe David Milch a very special debt. In phase after phase of this revision he has been of enormous help—in freeing us from preconceptions to allow us a new look at our subject, in discussing individual problems, in constant criticism and in suggestions for rewriting. He has been, all told, an invaluable colleague.

C. B.

R. P. W.

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# PART ONE

## *Making a Beginning*



# 1

## *Language, Thinking, Feeling, and Rhetoric*

**T**he human being may be called the animal with language. Upon a little reflection, we can see that only by means of language can mankind create and transmit the body of concepts, attitudes, values, and skills that constitute civilization. Only by language can we carry the past with us, understand the present, and project the future. Only by language can we have a clear notion of ourselves as individuals. "I think, therefore I am," as the philosopher Descartes put it. And only by language can we forge the bonds of a society—a society as distinguished from some sort of instinctual herd or swarm.

### **Language and Thought**

Usually, we regard language as merely a convenient device for communicating preexisting ideas or attitudes. Certainly, the presence of an audience (listener or reader) is commonly assumed, and later in this book, in treating the relation of the writer to the audience, we shall emphasize the importance of this aspect of the writing process.

It is indeed hard to overestimate the value of language in communication, but it is even harder to overestimate its value in thinking. Language is tied to the very process of thought. This principle is affirmed in a time-worn joke about the old lady who, when asked to say what she meant, replied, "But how can I know what I mean till I say it?" What the old lady refers to here is another aspect of language, not merely language as a means

of logical thought, but a way of exploring one's deepest feelings and attitudes.

How often have we felt that we knew our own minds on something, only to find, when we started to talk, that we didn't know at all what we were talking about. When we frame even the simplest sentence, we are forced to establish a set of meaningful relations; that is, we are forced to think more clearly. We instinctively know this, and we imply as much when, in a moment of confusion or doubt, we say, "Let's talk this out."

"Writing things out"—which is the business of this course—is only a more rigorous way of trying to understand a subject and to understand oneself in relation to that subject. "Talking out" and "writing out"—both are ways, fundamentally, of "thinking out."

To put matters another way, the study of writing is the study of the way the mind naturally works. It is not a matter of arbitrary rules.

Never forget this.

## Language and Feeling

We not only think things out; we feel things out, too. And language is fundamental to this "feeling out." A human being isn't merely a machine for logical thought. Thought shades off into feeling, and feeling shades off into thought. We cannot exclude feeling from our experience, nor should we wish to do so, but we do want our life of feeling and our life of thought to be consistent with each other, to make some kind of total sense. A person whose feelings run counter to his judgment is bound for disaster. We need to think of ourselves as unified beings.

To gain this unity, we need not only to think straight but also to understand our own feelings and to see how they are related to each other, to our own general experience, and to the world around us. Our use of language involves our instinctive attempt to clarify our feelings, to come to grips with them. We say, "Now that I've talked about it, I feel better." In other words, the talking-out process may not only help us to make up our minds but to "make up our feelings" too.

Expression involves thought or feelings or their interrelation. And do not forget that it also involves understanding, not only the world, but the self.

## What Is Rhetoric?

What is this course about? Is it merely concerned with topic sentences, figures of speech, and participial phrases? Does it merely have to do with outlining a discussion and studying the principles of unity, coherence, and



emphasis? Certainly it is concerned with those things, but they are not studied for their own sake.

They are studied because it is through language that we discover the world and ourselves. They are studied, too, because they contribute to the effective use of language—and thus to effective living.

Rhetoric, more specifically, is the art of using language effectively.

### **A note about you**

We have said that language stands at the very center of the life of thought and feeling. This may seem to cast an awesome shadow over the day-to-day business of studying coherence or the rules of sentence structure.

But no one reading this book is beginning at the beginning of the study of rhetoric. You began to learn language when you were an infant, and you are still learning it. Books have helped you to an effective use of language and now they will help you even more, but remember that what books give is not separate from what life gives. What books give is both an extension and a concentration of life.