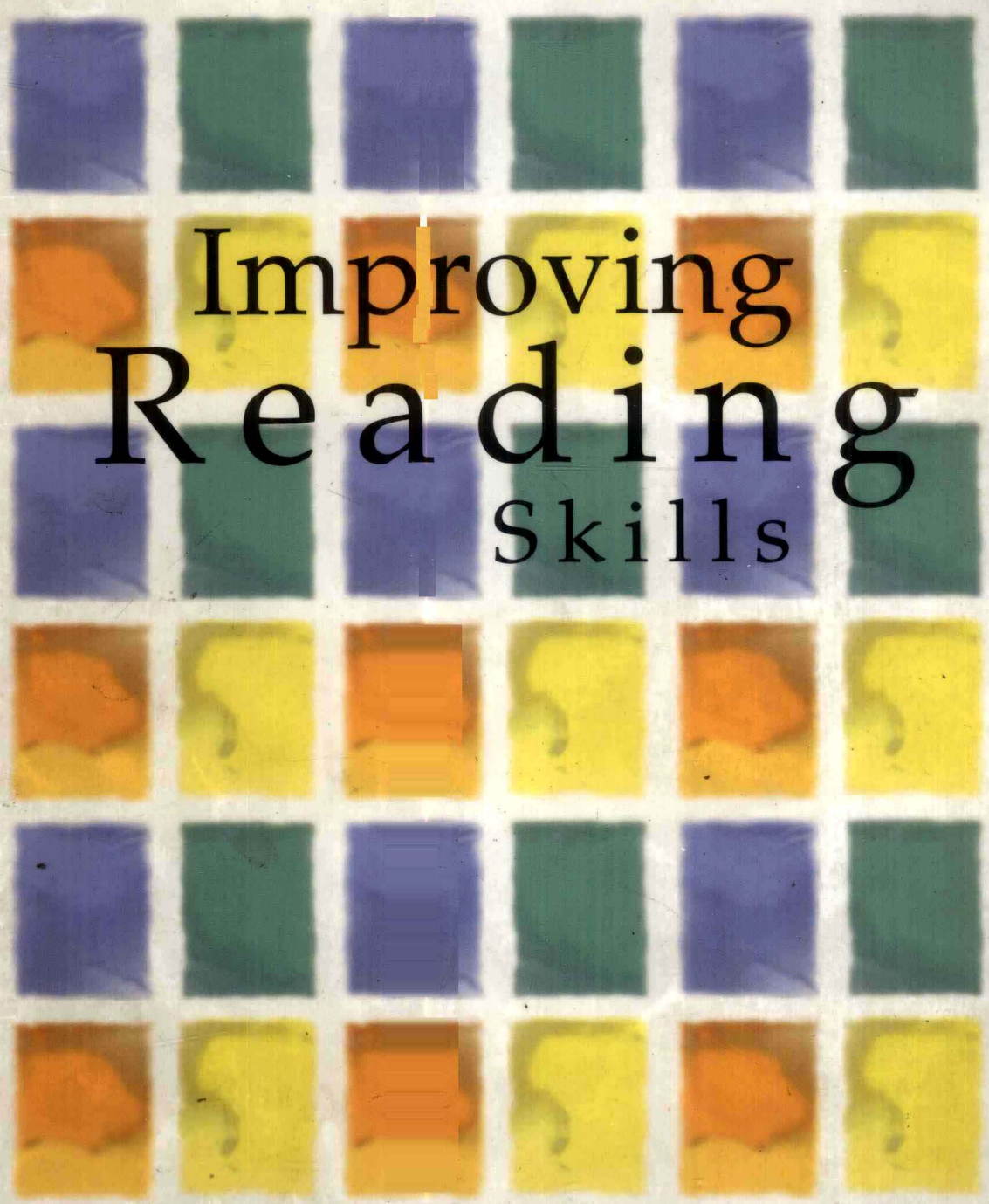


Deanne Milan Spears



# Improving Reading Skills

Fourth Edition

# Improving Reading Skills

FOURTH EDITION

Deanne Milan Spears

CITY COLLEGE OF SAN FRANCISCO



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## IMPROVING READING SKILLS

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# About the Author

DEANNE MILAN SPEARS received a BA and an MA in comparative literature from the University of Southern California. She has also done postgraduate work at San Francisco State University. Since 1968, she has been a full-time instructor in the English Department of City College of San Francisco, where she teaches a variety of courses in composition and reading. In her leisure time, she is most fond of reading, but secondary interests include the Arts and Crafts architectural movement, cooking, seeking out good inexpensive restaurants in San Francisco, and exploring the World Wide Web. In 1997 she married a fellow English teacher, David Spears.

# Preface

It is gratifying to prepare a fourth edition of *Improving Reading Skills*. Like the first three editions, the text aims to help college students become better readers. The basic principle that accounted for the success of the book in the past remains the same, but with each successive edition I have refined the book to keep it fresh and engaging. In this edition I have added a few features that I hope instructors and students alike will find appealing. The many reviewers who gave me suggestions, along with the comments of my students, have guided these changes, which are explained in detail further along.

The fourth edition contains 36 reading selections drawn from a variety of sources, most of them contemporary, representing the kinds of reading students will encounter in their college courses—especially in English courses that require reading expository and persuasive essays—and in their lives after their formal education ends. The book has no particular philosophy, no “ism” to flog. It seeks only to help students improve their technical skills and to read with enjoyment and with confidence. I believe that these goals are best attained when students read engaging, good-quality prose.

The fourth edition continues to stress vocabulary development in the context of each particular reading. In my experience, a weak vocabulary—perhaps even more than poor concentration or lack of interest—is a significant stumbling block for many college students. Because the interrelationship between comprehension and vocabulary is so strong, intensive vocabulary work was an immediate concern when I prepared the first edition. Teaching from the text for several semesters has only strengthened my conviction in this regard. Consequently, vocabulary is an integral part of both the text and exercises.

Toward this end, each reading is preceded by a Vocabulary Preview introducing students to a few words they will encounter in the selection. Each preview contains a short section on word histories (etymology), word parts, and word families. These previews have the twin benefits of teaching students the meanings of a few important words they will encounter in the selection, and more important, they illustrate how to study vocabulary systematically. Rather than being taught in isolation, the elements of English vocabulary words (roots, prefixes, and suffixes)—so useful for word-attack skills—are taught in context of the selection. Finally, each selection ends with two vocabulary exercises: The first is a simple multiple-choice exercise; the form of the second varies, as a glance through the text will show.

In the fourth edition, six selections have been retained from earlier editions. From the reviewers' suggestions, I kept these favorites: Rose Del Castillo Guilbault, "The Conveyor-Belt Ladies"; Luis Rodriguez, "La Vida Loca: Two Generations of Gang Members"; Sheldon Campbell, "Games Elephants Play" (which appeared in the first edition); Charles Finney, "The Life and Death of a Western Gladiator"; James Villas, "A Night of Ice and Death"; and Patrick Welsh, "It Takes Two to Tango."

The new readings embrace a wide range of topics. Some examples: Dave Barry writes humorously about why male-female relationships often go wrong; a young black man embarking on a solo canoe trip down the Mississippi River has his first encounter with racism (Eddy Harris); a student and amateur scientist disproves the common misconception that ants cooperate (Richard Feynman); a researcher descends into the tunnels beneath New York City and interviews their subterranean dwellers (Terry Williams); Nelson Mandela describes the ritual that adolescent Xhosa males in South Africa must undergo to become men; a Pulitzer Prize nominee, David Ferrell, writes a chronicle of the Badwater Race, the most grueling ultra-marathon race on earth; and one of America's best-known science writers, Jared Diamond, cites the doomed civilization of Easter Island as a warning about the likely effects of overpopulation and our own reckless misuse of natural resources.

In Part 4, "Reading about Issues," students will read paired editorials on two important controversies—biracial adoption and bilingual education. Following these are readings on the often-ignored ramifications of adoption, the V-chip that will soon be installed in all new television sets, and allegations of animal abuse in the Iditarod, the annual Alaskan sled-dog race. Students should find this collection of persuasive writing challenging and thought-provoking; in addition, the selections will show students how professional writers structure and defend arguments.

The exercises following each selection are more extensive and cover a wider range of skills than those in most other textbooks. Step by step, each exercise provides practice with skills at a level appropriate for each selection. By the completion of the course, these exercises will help students become competent, accurate, and analytical readers. Specifically, students will practice with the following skills:

- Determining the main ideas and the author's purpose.
- Comprehending main ideas.
- Distinguishing between main ideas and supporting details.
- Recognizing supporting details.
- Interpreting meaning.
- Making inferences.
- Drawing conclusions.
- Distinguishing between fact and opinion.
- Analyzing structure.
- Annotating text; writing paraphrases and summaries.

The fourth edition contains a number of changes. Here are the most significant ones:

- The text opens with three short introductory sections explaining techniques for improving vocabulary, using the dictionary, and annotating, paraphrasing, and summarizing.
- The introductions to each part have been extended and reorganized so that the most important skills are taught in the beginning of the text. Specifically, students are introduced in Part 1 to main idea and supporting details; in Part 2 to the importance of context clues for vocabulary development; in Part 3 to making accurate inferences; in Part 4 to learning to analyze and evaluate persuasive writing and kinds of evidence; and in Part 5 to identifying transitions and logical relationships between ideas.
- The headnotes for each selection have been expanded to provide more background about the subject and more biographical information about each writer.
- I have shortened the Vocabulary Preview sections to accommodate other changes and to avoid *tedium*. In addition, most of the previews contain a brief exercise or two. For example, given a new prefix and an illustrative word or two, students might be asked to define two other words beginning with the same prefix.
- Interspersed throughout the readings are several maps, photos, and drawings.

These are the most significant changes in the exercise apparatus:

- Exercises have more variety. Although I have retained multiple-choice questions on main idea, author's purpose, and comprehension, many exercises require the student to interpret and explain ideas from the selections in his or her own words. Easier skills are emphasized in Parts 1 and 2, and in Parts 3, 4, and 5, the material becomes gradually more difficult.
- The format of the exercises varies from selection to selection, resulting in less uniformity than in earlier editions. Inference questions are not taken up until Part 3, although both Parts 1 and 2 contain open-ended questions on interpreting meaning, analyzing structure, and drawing conclusions. For example, when students are asked to analyze the structure of a piece, they might be asked to write a simple outline, to find the thesis statement, to write a sentence in their own words representing the main idea of a particular paragraph, to explain a figure of speech, and so forth.
- Each of the persuasive readings in Part 4 contains extensive open-ended exercises, in which students are asked to state the writer's argument, to briefly list the writer's support for the argument, to explain the kinds of evidence, and to assess the overall effectiveness of the argument.
- Throughout the text are a few writing exercises in annotation, paraphrasing, or summarizing. For the early selections, I offer examples to get them started before they begin on their own material.

- The most significant and, I hope, intriguing change in the apparatus is the section called "For Further Exploration," where I have listed relevant books, movies (where appropriate), and Web sites. These suggestions point students in several directions if they want to pursue a particular subject in more depth or from a different perspective. In this way, students see that learning comes in many forms, and they recognize the interconnectedness between print and visual mediums.

It is frustrating to type in a Web address and to learn that the site is defunct or has moved or to receive that most maddening of messages, "No DNS Entry." Consequently, in preparing the section "For Further Exploration," I have tried to exercise care that recommended World Wide Web sites are still operating. I verified all addresses in late spring 1999, but of course, I cannot guarantee that three years hence they will still be accessible. To ensure as far as possible that readers will still be able to visit Web sites after the turn of the century, I limited my suggestions to sites maintained by established institutions.\*

Instructors who used earlier editions will also note two changes in the instructor's manual.

- As before, the manual provides readability analyses, suggestions for teaching each selection, and answers to all of the exercises. For ease of use, however, the readability analyses and synopses precede the answers. In addition, instructors can consult the synopsis before assigning a selection, if time is limited and if only a portion of the readings will be assigned.
- A 25-item multiple-choice vocabulary quiz for each of the book's five parts is also included, along with vocabulary study lists.

First, I want to acknowledge my daughter, Charlotte Milan, and two of her friends, Stephen Williams and Lindsay Corrigan, who cheerfully answered questions about contemporary culture and also suggested a few Web sites.

Special thanks to Robert Stamps, emeritus at City College of San Francisco, for passing on Pamela Burdman's article, "Twenty Years out of Saigon" and to my husband, David, for calling to my attention Richard Wolkomir's article, "Making Up for Lost Time: The Rewards of Reading at Last." I also must mention the suggestion made by Catherine Phillips of City College of San Francisco to include partially completed paraphrase and summary exercises. And thanks, too, to Arthur Zich, our neighbor, for allowing me to look through his portfolio of published material, which yielded the informative and moving piece, "Japanese-Americans: Home at Last."

I wish to thank the many teachers from around the country who reviewed the third edition. Without their kind words and constructive suggestions, this would have been a very different book: Patricia Farabee, Southern Illinois University; Lori Grimm, Pima Community College; Doreen Kaller, Rio Hondo Col-

\*A current list of web sites for this text can be found at <http://www.mhhe/spears>

lege; Sandra Lloyd, Tomball College; Margaret McClain, Arkansas State University; Mitye Jo Richey, Community College of Allegheny County; and Ann Marie Tevlin, New York City Technical College.

Finally, heartfelt thanks to Sarah Moyers, sponsoring editor, and to Christine Vaughan and Ben Morrison. Their help, encouragement, and good humor have been invaluable.

Instructors should feel free to write me at my e-mail address: *dspears@sirius.com*. I can also be reached through the McGraw-Hill Higher Education web site at *http://mhhe.com/spears*. I will do my best to answer all queries within a day or two.

# To the Student

## THE AIMS OF THE TEXT

*Improving Reading Skills* is now in its fourth edition, which suggests that the students who have used the previous three editions have benefited from its format and content. You should, too, if you do your course work consistently, diligently, and honestly. Above all, both your instructor and I hope that you will derive the ultimate benefit from the instruction provided in the text: an enjoyment of reading so that it becomes a lifelong pursuit. Reading well allows you to travel, to dream, to escape, to learn, to question, and, most crucially as a college student, to think.

The 36 selections in this edition are drawn from books, magazines, and newspapers. Most are nonfiction, representing both the reading required in your other college courses (especially English courses) and reading material you will encounter the rest of your life after you finish school. The readings have been carefully chosen for their high interest level; they represent a variety of topics and writing styles. Some are entertaining, some are informative, some are persuasive. Many will give you something to think about—and to write about. Since the selections are arranged in order of difficulty, as you work through them you will be able to refine your comprehension, vocabulary, and analytical skills with increasingly harder readings.

Good reading involves a systematic approach, whether you are reading for an academic course or for pleasure. All the exercises will demonstrate to you, with consistent practice, what this process involves. Once you complete the text, you should be better prepared to tackle all of your reading, from the daily newspaper to the essay your English composition instructor assigns, to your psychology textbook, to your favorite monthly magazines.

## IMPROVING YOUR VOCABULARY

A major premise of the book is that a good vocabulary is essential for good comprehension skills. Stated another way, if you don't know the meanings of many words a writer uses, you can't very well understand what he or she is saying. All that you can hope for is to come away with a hazy idea of the main point. This, clearly, is not reading.

The best way to improve your vocabulary is to commit yourself during the term to looking up many unfamiliar words that you encounter in your reading. At first this task may seem overwhelming, but as you work through the material, you will see that the job is not as daunting as it may at first appear. The Vocabulary Previews that open each selection introduce you to a few words that you will encounter in the particular reading. In them, you will be shown how to break an unfamiliar word into its component parts—prefix, root, and suffix—as an aid to getting at its meaning. Second, in the introduction to Part 2 you will be shown how to use context clues to increase your stock of vocabulary words. Finally, since each selection ends with two vocabulary exercises, you will have ample opportunity to learn definitions of words worth knowing from the readings.

As you work through these exercises, remember that it is not cheating to look them up in the dictionary. And since your instructor may test you periodically on important vocabulary words, another suggestion is to write these new words and their meanings either in a special notebook or on 3" by 5" index cards. In this way, you can review them quickly before tests rather than having to hunt through the book to find them again.

As will be demonstrated throughout the text, good comprehension and good vocabulary skills are interdependent. And as the weeks go by, you will be pleasantly surprised to find that words you have met in the earlier selections will turn up again in later ones and in your other reading, as well. For example, one student told me that every morning while riding on a San Francisco Muni bus, she had seen one of those cardboard advertisements over a window, which used a word previously unfamiliar to her—*nostalgia*. One day she encountered the word in a Vocabulary Preview section, and suddenly the ad made sense to her.

## ESSENTIAL READING SKILLS

The exercise material following each reading will help you practice a wide variety of important reading skills. Taken together, they will help you read more systematically. They will show you what to look for when you read, and they will provide a structure for your reading. These are the specific skills, apart from vocabulary, that you will work on during the term:

- Comprehending main ideas.
- Determining the author's purpose.
- Distinguishing between main ideas and supporting details.
- Making accurate inferences.
- Distinguishing between fact and opinion.
- Analyzing structure.
- Learning how to annotate.
- Writing paraphrases and summaries.

The exercise material ends with questions for writing or discussion, which ask you to respond to the reading in a short essay or to consider important questions that the selection raises. Finally, the sections called "For Further Exploration" will give you suggestions if you wish to examine an idea in more detail. This section includes relevant books to read, movies to watch or rent, and World Wide Web sites to explore. Concerning Web sites, the World Wide Web is evolving and growing at such a dizzying pace that it is probably presumptuous for me to recommend sites. What I have tried to do is to point you in some directions so that if you are particularly intrigued by a selection and wanted to read more, you could find a starting place on the Web. Many of the recommended sites will provide you with links to related sites. However, I leave surfing the Web for more creative pursuits and for personal indulgence to you.

## CALCULATING YOUR COMPREHENSION SCORE

The instructions accompanying each set of exercises ask you to do Exercises A and B without looking back at the selection. (Your instructor may ask you to disregard these instructions.) Not looking back, however, will force you to read with greater attention and concentration than you would if you know you can look back at the passage to refresh your memory. When you are finished with all the exercises, calculate your comprehension score by counting your correct answers for the first two exercises, according to the formula.

Since the two questions on determining the main idea and author's purpose are most crucial, each is worth 2 points, while the main-idea questions in Exercise B are each worth 1 point. Your final score will be a percentage of 100, which is the total number of points possible. Study this example of a hypothetical student who got both questions in Exercise A correct and four questions out of six in B correct:

A. No. right  $\underline{2} \times \underline{2} = \underline{4}$

B. No. right  $\underline{4} \times 1 = \underline{4}$

Total points from A and B  $\underline{8} \times 10 = \underline{80}$  percent

Since the selections become progressively more difficult, maintaining a score of 70 percent or higher indicates real improvement. A chart on which you can keep track of your progress is included at the back of the text.

Finally, to be sure that you get the most out of the text and the course, ask your instructor for help with anything you do not understand. If you have questions, comments, or suggestions for me, you can reach me via e-mail at [dspears@sirius.com](mailto:dspears@sirius.com) or at McGraw-Hill's home page at <http://www.mhhe.com/spears>. I will do my best to respond within a day or two.

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-------------------------------------	----

- 1** Dave Barry  
**Tips for Women: How to Have a Relationship with a Guy** 23

*We're not talking about different wavelengths here. We're talking about different planets, in completely different solar systems. Elaine cannot communicate meaningfully with Roger about their relationship any more than she can meaningfully play chess with a duck. Because the sum total of Roger's thinking on this particular topic is as follows: Huh?*

- 2** Rose Del Castillo Guilbault  
**The Conveyor-Belt Ladies** 33

*Most of these women had started in the fields. The vegetable packing sheds were a step up, easier than the back-breaking, grueling work the field demanded. The work was more tedious than strenuous, paid better, provided fairly steady hours and clean bathrooms. Best of all, you weren't subjected to the elements.*

*That summer I was 16, my mother got jobs for both of us as tomato sorters. That's how I came to be included in the seasonal sorority of the conveyor belt.*

- 3**   **Bobbie Ann Mason**

**The Burden of the Feast** 43

*Two days before the trial period was up, Mama stopped going to the restaurant. She didn't give up the job voluntarily. My grandfather had stepped in and told her she couldn't go on. "We need you here at home," he said. "Running a hamburger joint out on the highway ain't fitten work."*
  
- 4**   **Eddy L. Harris**

**Mississippi Solo** 54

*As my old friend Robert had told me, and he was true so far, here I was traveling from the high north where blacks are pretty scarce and slicing into the deep south where feelings toward blacks are often none too sweet—historically at least. And people will see that I'm black only moments after they see that my canoe is green. Maybe even before.*
  
- 5**   **Debra Dickerson**

**Who Shot Johnny?** 65

*We push for an arrest because we owe it to Johnny and to ourselves as citizens. We don't think about it otherwise—our low expectations are too ingrained. A Harvard aunt notwithstanding, for people like Johnny, Marvin Gaye was right that only three things are sure: taxes, death, and trouble. At least it wasn't the second.*
  
- 6**   **Luis J. Rodriguez**

**La Vida Loca ("The Crazy Life"): Two Generations of Gang Members** 75

*I had to cut Ramiro's bloodline to the street before it became too late. I had to begin the long intense struggle to save his life from the gathering storm of street violence—some 20 years after I had sneaked out of the hood in the dark of night and removed myself from the death fires of La Vida Loca.*
  
- 7**   **Mark Fritz**

**Being Paid to Snitch: "Rewards" Becoming the 4th "R"** 85

*Today's topic, class, is ethics: If somebody offered you \$50, would you be more inclined to turn in a fellow student who did something wrong?*

*Try this pop quiz on Mrs. Foley's freshman English class, and not a single hand goes up. But ask them if they think somebody else can be bought, and hardly a hand stays down. Everybody knows somebody who would turn informant in exchange for a trip to the Gap.*

*"People are greedy," says Charlaina Hughes, a 15-year-old freshman.*

## PART 2

### REFINING THE BASICS

#### Introduction: Improving Vocabulary with Context Clues

97

#### 8 Sheldon Campbell

##### Games Elephants Play

105

*Elephants, female elephants that is, are seen by most zoo visitors as simple, lovable creatures, given to making loud trumpeting noises, tossing dirt onto their backs, addicted to joyous, splashing baths, and cadging peanuts or other goodies by reaching out with their trunks. That picture, as far as it goes, is reasonably accurate. But elephants are not simpletons. Field studies have shown them to be highly intelligent creatures that ordinarily live in well-organized matriarchies, sometimes leisurely browsing, sometimes pacing across a savannah in a deceptively fast and soundless gait as though, in a memorable line from Isak Dinesen, they had “an appointment at the end of the world.”*

#### 9 Richard P. Feynman

##### The Amateur Scientist

117

*I remember that when I was a kid my father would tell me how wonderful ants are, and how they cooperate. I would watch very carefully three or four ants carrying a little piece of chocolate back to their nest. At first glance it looks like efficient, marvelous, brilliant cooperation. But if you look at it carefully, you’ll see that it’s nothing of the kind: They’re all behaving as if the chocolate is held up by something else. They pull at it one way or the other way. An ant may crawl over it while it’s being pulled at by the others. It wobbles, it wiggles, the directions are all confused. The chocolate doesn’t move in a nice way toward the nest.*

#### 10 Charles Finney

##### The Life and Death of a Western Gladiator

128

*The direct rays of the sun could, in a short time, kill him. If the temperature dropped too low he would freeze. Without food he would starve. Without moisture he would die of dehydration. If a man or a horse stepped on him he would be crushed. If anything chased him he could run neither very far nor very fast.*

*Thus it was at the hour of his birth. Thus it would be, with modifications, all his life.*

#### 11 Geoffrey Cowley

##### The Language Explosion

140

*The journey toward language starts not in the nursery but in the womb, where the fetus is continually bathed in the sounds of its mother’s voice. Babies just 4 days old can*

*distinguish one language from another. French newborns suck more vigorously when they hear French spoken than when they hear Russian—and Russian babies show the opposite preference. At first, they notice only general rhythms and melodies. But newborns are also sensitive to speech sounds, and they home in quickly on the ones that matter.*

- 12 Richard Wolkomir**  
**Making Up for Lost Time: The Rewards of Reading at Last** 152

*But now we try something new, a real-world test: reading the supermarket advertising inserts from a local newspaper. Each insert is a hodgepodge of food pictures, product names and prices. I point to a word and Ken ponders. “C” he says finally. “And it’s got those two e’s—so that would be ‘coffee’!” I point again. He gets “Pepsi.” Silently, he sounds out the letters on a can’s label. “So that’s ‘corn,’ ” he announces.*

- 13 Terry Williams**  
**Voices from the Tunnel** 168

*Many underground residents do not consider themselves homeless. They are, as one woman put it, “temporarily without shelter,” and they consider the subterranean chambers of the tunnel a safer housing alternative than city shelters. Inhabiting a harsh ecology, deprived of water, natural light, food, electricity, and heat, they struggle constantly to protect themselves against cold and dampness.*

- 14 Cynthia Crossen**  
**Becoming a Nation of Poor Listeners** 184

*Overwhelmed by the incessant, intrusive babble of the modern world, the skill of listening has fallen on hard times. People say they are constantly repeating orders, directions and questions. The word “What?” rings through the halls of commerce. In fact, studies show that people recall only about 25 percent of what they have heard in the past few days.*

## **PART 3** **TACKLING MORE CHALLENGING PROSE**

- Introduction: Making Inferences** 195

- 15 Pamela Burdman**  
**Twenty Years Out of Saigon** 201

*For Ly, the C5A’s crash was just another detour on a remarkable odyssey that has taken her from a bombed-out village in the Vietnamese countryside to orphanages in Danang and Saigon, and eventually to the [San Francisco] Bay Area, where she now owns a home, works two jobs and is raising a child of her own.*

- 16 James Fallows**  
**Throwing Like a Girl** 212
- "For young boys it is culturally acceptable and politically correct to develop these skills," says Linda Wells, of the Arizona State softball team. "They are mentored and networked. Usually girls are not coached at all, or are coached by Mom—or if it's by Dad, he may not be much of an athlete. Girls are often stuck with the bottom of the male talent pool as examples. I would argue that rather than learning to 'throw like a girl,' they learn to throw like poor male athletes. I say that a bad throw is 'throwing like an old man.' This is not gender, it's acculturation."*
- 17 Nelson Mandela**  
**Long Walk to Freedom** 224
- When I was sixteen, the regent decided that it was time that I become a man. In Xhosa tradition, this is achieved through one means only: circumcision. In my tradition, an uncircumcised male cannot be heir to his father's wealth, cannot marry or officiate in tribal rituals. An uncircumcised Xhosa man is a contradiction in terms, for he is not considered a man at all, but a boy. For the Xhosa people, circumcision represents the formal incorporation of males into society. It is not just a surgical procedure, but a lengthy and elaborate ritual in preparation for manhood. As a Xhosa, I count my years as a man from the date of my circumcision.*
- 18 Ellen Alderman and Caroline Kennedy**  
**New Jersey v. T.L.O.: The School Search Cases** 236
- Choplick opened T.L.O.'s purse and saw a pack of Marlboro cigarettes "sitting right on top there." He held the cigarettes in front of T.L.O. and accused her of lying. But as he did so, Choplick looked down into the purse again and this time saw a package of E-Z Widders. He says, "If you're a school administrator, you know E-Z Widders are rolling papers used for marijuana."*
- At that point, Choplick began to empty T.L.O.'s pocketbook. He found a pipe, several empty plastic bags, and one bag containing a tobacco-like substance. "You take the plastic bag and take a smell," Choplick says, "and you smell marijuana. And now you say, 'Whoa, whoa, whoa.' "*
- 19 Roger Swardson**  
**Hard Labor** 249
- I am home at 3:43 A.M., nearly 14 hours after taking my place on the benches waiting for a second-shift job ticket. I made \$5.40 an hour plus \$3 per rider and a \$2.50 gas allowance for the 70-mile drive, a net of \$60.16 for the day. My passengers will clear around \$45.*