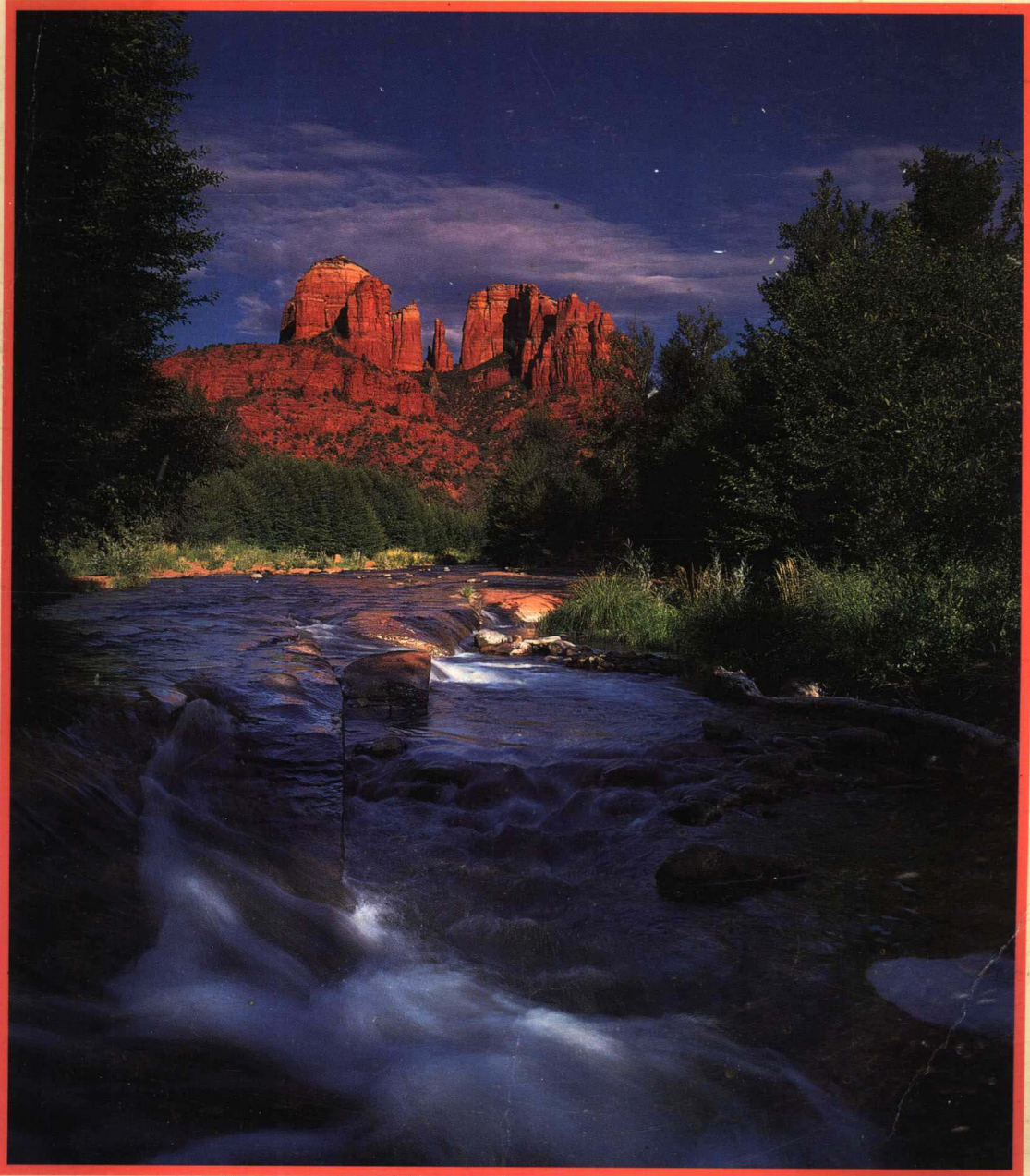


CROSSCURRENTS

Writing on the Stream of Reading



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Crosscurrents
Writing on the Stream of Reading

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Cover: "Red Rock Crossing, Secona, Arizona" from Kerrick James.

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Published simultaneously in Canada.

Printed in the United States of America.

International Standard Book Number: 0-669-21458-2 (Student Edition)

International Standard Book Number: 0-669-21459-0 (Instructor's Edition)

Library of Congress Catalog Number: 91-71581

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

To the Student

During college, and afterward as well, most of the writing you do will be functional writing, writing done for a specific purpose. Functional writing is intended to display your knowledge of a subject or your ideas about what you have learned, usually from something you have read. Therefore, understanding the connection between reading and writing is crucial to becoming an effective writer.

The connection between reading and writing is clearest when your reading provokes ideas that can be fully expressed only in written language, and when your writing contains ideas based on your understanding of others' writing. *Crosscurrents: Writing on the Stream of Reading* will help you make the connection between reading and writing and thus enable you to write more clearly.

Crosscurrents is divided into six parts, each with two chapters, followed by a grammar handbook. The initial chapter of each part contains reading selections, and the second chapter explores rhetorical material. (Rhetoric refers to the writer's methods of developing and supporting ideas.)

To get to know this book and to use it effectively, you should take the following steps:

1. Read the table of contents to familiarize yourself with the readings. Note the different theme of each reading chapter and try to recognize the logical order of themes in the book. See if you recognize any of the authors' names. Sometimes the title of a piece will reveal the specific subject matter of the readings. If the title does not provide enough clues, turn to the essay or story and try to determine what it is about.
2. Before receiving a class assignment, sample the contents of the text by reading a story or essay that appeals to you. Use the study aids that accompany the reading selection to see how they can help you. You may want to choose one of the writing assignments and think about how it combines with the reading.
3. Pick one rhetoric chapter and read through it. Select a chapter containing material you would particularly like to know more about. Or read through the rhetoric chapter that follows the essay or story you read and consider its thematic connection to the reading.

If you perform these tasks early in the course, or even before the course begins, you will acquire an understanding of this book that will be quite useful to you later. This

knowledge will allow you to move quickly past the book's surface features to a deeper awareness of what the text offers you and what you can bring to it. You will also see that in reading you go through a number of stages:

1. *Comprehension* Reading for accurate knowledge of an essay's or story's contents.
2. *Criticism* Reading to understand the implications and significance of a writer's ideas and the way the writer discovered those ideas in events, situations and other people's lives.
3. *Application* Reading to use a writer's ideas, as if they were magnifying glasses and compasses, to examine another part of the world or to consider a particular issue.

You may follow these steps one by one, or you may find yourself taking them together, depending on the difficulty of a text, or on your aim while reading. The specific purpose of your reading is to produce thoughtful, well-organized, carefully-worded essays that address issues or problems that concern you. This writing will help you find your place in the intellectual life of both your immediate society (college), and the broader society (the nation). Your ability to accomplish this task depends, in part, on how effectively you use this book.

Using the Reading Chapters

Study aids of several kinds precede and follow each reading selection. You should approach your reading along the path these study aids provide and use them to help you look back on the stories and essays. As you read these chapters, you will encounter the following sections:

Biographical sketch This section presents a brief description of the author's life and works and/or the chief distinction of the writing included here. This sketch should remind you that the author is a real person and as such bears an individual responsibility for his or her ideas; that is, the author is not an unquestioned authority.

Looking Ahead Before each essay or story is a brief list of suggestions for reading. Some are questions you can ask yourself before reading and try to answer as you read. They include concerns you may have while reading, and they note vocabulary words you may need to look up. Mark the page that this section starts on, so that you can refer to this study aid as you read.

Text Every five lines of the text are numbered for convenient reference. You may use the line numbers in separate notes you make on your readings, and you will find line references in the rhetorical chapters and the grammar handbook when examples from the reading are employed.

Looking Back Following each essay or story is a series of questions about the reading. It is a good idea to read through these questions in advance. They address issues and raise questions that will encourage you to comprehend, criticize, and apply what you read. Go back to these questions to review the text and to confirm your knowledge and understanding of it.

Writing Assignments Also following each reading selection are three essay writing assignments. They frequently ask you to apply to your own writing the ideas found in the piece you have just read. Each of these assignments requires careful reading and consideration. They attempt to put both the piece you have read and the essay you will write into a context where their connections can be seen and understood.

Using the Rhetoric Chapters

Each rhetoric chapter is introduced by remarks pointing out the chapter's particular challenge to writers. You should read this introduction to get a general idea of the importance of paragraph structure, comparison and contrast, diction, and other rhetorical concepts.

The chapters advance steadily through discussion of specific topics. You will see that most of the models of effective writing and most of the examples illustrating points under discussion come from the reading selections in the preceding chapter. The selections are referred to by author, page, and line number. Obviously, the more familiar you are with the readings, the better you will understand the references. But the references should be able to stand on their own and show you examples of the points under discussion. Whether you have read the original text or not, however, turning back to it will enable you to see a writing method, structural unit, or turn of phrase in context.

Ending each rhetoric chapter are writing assignments that ask you to put into practice the ideas you have just studied.

Using the Grammar Handbook

This section of the book covers the major grammar problems that you are likely to encounter while writing. Your instructor will assign pages in the handbook, and you can also use it on your own to review points of grammar. The exercises ask you to write both your own sentences employing grammatical principles, and to rewrite sentences taken from the reading. Do your rewriting before looking up the selection, then turn back to the original sentence or paragraph and check your own rewritten version.

Reading and writing are delicate, complex skills; they require careful attention, patience, and understanding. It is my hope that *Crosscurrents: Writing on the Stream of Reading* will help you to achieve these skills with as little pain and as much pleasure as possible.

Acknowledgments

The following individuals generously reviewed this text and provided many helpful suggestions: Patricia Alexander, Charles C. Mott Community College; Jose E. Benavides, Laredo Junior College; Carole Bogue, Canada College; Francine L. DeFrance, Cerritos Community College; Marie Foster, Broward Community College; Thomas L. Franke, Lansing Community College; Helane Levine-Keating, Pace University; Katharine Stone, Georgia State University; Betty Jeane Wallace, Sinclair Community College; and William F. Woods, Wichita State University.

L.M.

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