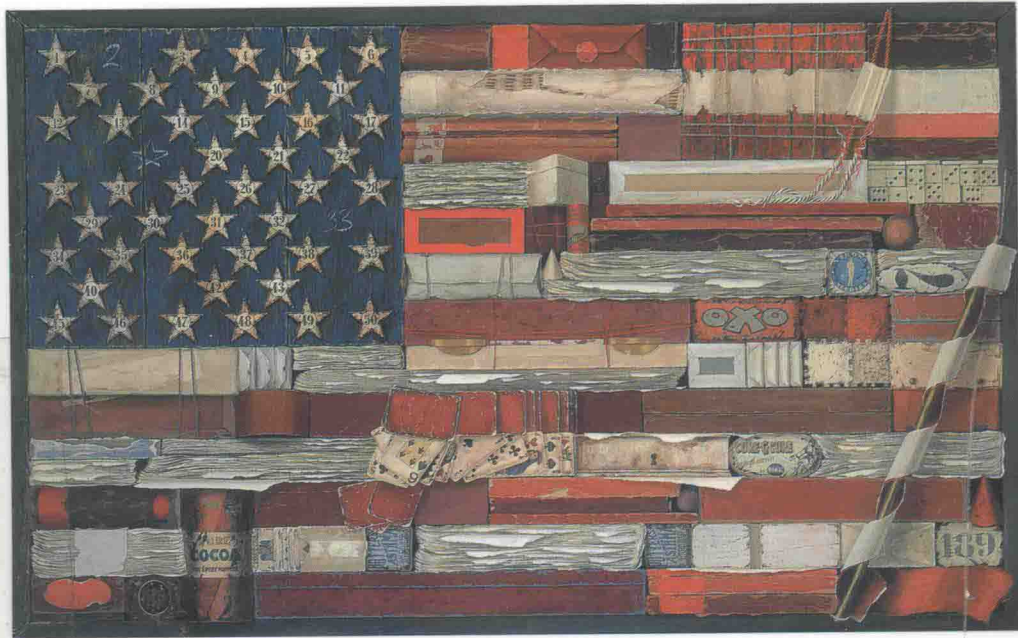


**rereading
america**

Cultural Contexts *for* Critical Thinking *and* Writing



Gary Colombo • Robert Cullen • Bonnie Lisle

Rereading America

Cultural Contexts for Critical Thinking and Writing

Seventh Edition

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Rereading America

*Cultural Contexts for Critical
Thinking and Writing*

Preface for Instructors

About *Rereading America*

Designed for first-year writing and critical thinking courses, *Rereading America* anthologizes a diverse set of readings focused on the myths that dominate U.S. culture. This central theme brings together thought-provoking selections on a broad range of topics — family, education, success, gender roles, race, religion, and America seen from a global perspective — topics that raise controversial issues meaningful to college students of all backgrounds. We've drawn these readings from many sources, both within the academy and outside of it; the selections are both multicultural and cross-curricular and thus represent an unusual variety of voices, styles, and subjects.

The readings in this anthology speak directly to students' experiences and concerns. Every college student has had some brush with prejudice, and most have something to say about education, the family, or the gender stereotypes they see in films and on television. The issues raised here help students link their personal experiences with broader cultural perspectives and lead them to analyze, or "read," the cultural forces that have shaped and continue to shape their lives. By linking the personal and the cultural, students begin to recognize that they are not academic outsiders — they too have knowledge, assumptions, and intellectual frameworks that give them authority in academic culture. Connecting personal knowledge and academic discourse helps students see that they are able to think, speak, and write academically and that they don't have to absorb passively what the "experts" say.

Features of the Seventh Edition

A Cultural Approach to Critical Thinking Like its predecessors, the seventh edition of *Rereading America* is committed to the premise that learning to think critically means learning to identify and see beyond dominant cultural myths — collective and often unconsciously held beliefs that influence our thinking, reading, and writing. Instead of treating cultural diversity as just another topic to be studied or "appreciated," *Rereading America* encourages students to grapple with the real differences in perspective that arise in a

pluralistic society like ours. This method helps students to break through conventional assumptions and patterns of thought that hinder fresh critical responses and inhibit dialogue. It helps them recognize that even the most apparently “natural” fact or obvious idea results from a process of social construction. And it helps them to develop the intellectual independence essential to critical thinking, reading, and writing.

Classic and Conservative Perspectives To provide students with the historical context they often need, each chapter in this edition of *Rereading America* includes a “classic” expression of the myth under examination. Approaching the myth of success, for example, by way of Horatio Alger’s *Ragged Dick* — or the myth of racial superiority by way of Thomas Jefferson’s infamous diatribe against “race mixing” — gives students a better sense of the myth’s origins and impact. We’ve also included at least one contemporary conservative revision of the myth in each chapter, so you’ll find in this edition readings by cultural critics who stand to the right of center, writers like Rick Santorum, Shelby Steele, Ken Hamblin, Dinesh D’Sousa, and David Kupelian.

New Issues Today, tensions between secular and religious values continue to trouble communities across America. Not a year goes by without a case coming before the courts involving issues such as prayer in school, the display of the Ten Commandments, the public celebration of religious holidays, the teaching of evolution, or the inclusion of “God” in the Pledge of Allegiance. This edition of *Rereading America* offers a new chapter that invites students to reflect on the role of religion in American culture. “One Nation Under God: American Myths of Church and State” examines the current resurgence of religion in the United States and explores the myths of secularism and religious belief that frame our thinking about the meaning of faith. Authors in this chapter include Anne Lamott, David Kupelian, Bill McKibben, and Eric Marcus, who examine the foundations of personal belief and its force in a secular culture. The Visual Portfolio offers a pictorial meditation on the delicate balance between belief and intolerance in American society. Diana L. Eck and Maria Poggi Johnson explore religious diversity — and religious division — in contemporary America. The chapter closes with readings addressing the competing claims of church and state, with pieces from James Madison, Noah Feldman, and Sam Harris.

Timely New Readings To keep *Rereading America* up to date, we’ve worked hard to bring you the best new voices speaking on issues of race, gender, class, family, education, religion, and freedom. As in past editions, we’ve retained old favorites like Malcolm X, Richard Rodriguez, Shelby Steele, Jamaica Kincaid, Deborah Tannen, Jean Anyon, Toni Cade Bambara, Gary Soto, Judith Ortiz Cofer, and Mike Rose. But you’ll also find a host of new selections by such authors as Evan Wolfson, Jonathan Kozol, Maysan Haydar, Deborah Rudacille, Sam Harris, and Harvey Mansfield. And like earlier versions, this edition of *Rereading America* includes a healthy mix of personal

and academic writing, representing a wide variety of genres, styles, and rhetorical strategies.

Visual Portfolios In addition to frontispieces and cartoons, we've included a Visual Portfolio of myth-related images in every chapter of *Rereading America*. These collections of photographs, advertisements, and reproductions of famous paintings invite students to examine how visual "texts" are constructed and how, like written texts, they are susceptible to multiple readings and rereadings. Each portfolio is accompanied by a series of questions that encourage critical analysis and connect portfolio images to ideas and themes in chapter reading selections. As in earlier editions, the visual frontispieces that open each chapter are integrated into the prereading assignments found in the chapter introductions. The cartoons, offered as a bit of comic relief and as opportunities for visual thinking, are paired with appropriate readings throughout the text.

Focus on Media We've continued the practice of including selections focusing on the media. Chapter Three includes a selection by Diana Kendall on the media's role in disseminating myths of material success. Chapter Four offers analyses of gender issues in the media, including Jean Kilbourne on images of women in advertising and Joan Morgan on black feminism and hip-hop culture. In our new chapter on religion, Chapter Six, David Kupelian argues that the media corrodes key religious values. And in Chapter Seven, Todd Gitlin examines the ways American popular culture influences societies throughout the world.

Focus on Struggle and Resistance Most multicultural readers approach diversity in one of two ways: either they adopt a pluralist approach and conceive of American society as a kind of salad bowl of cultures, or, in response to recent worries about the lack of "objectivity" in the multicultural curriculum, they take what might be called the "talk show" approach and present American culture as a series of pro-and-con debates on a number of social issues. The seventh edition of *Rereading America*, like its predecessors, follows neither of these approaches. Pluralist readers, we feel, make a promise that's impossible to keep: no single text, and no single course, can do justice to the many complex cultures that inhabit the United States. Thus, the materials selected for *Rereading America* aren't meant to offer a taste of what "family" means for Native Americans, or the flavor of gender relations among immigrants. Instead, we've included selections like Melvin Dixon's "Aunt Ida Pieces a Quilt" or Harlon Dalton's "Horatio Alger," because they offer us fresh critical perspectives on the common myths that shape our ideas, values, and beliefs. Rather than seeing this anthology as a mosaic or kaleidoscope of cultural fragments that combine to form a beautiful picture, it's more accurate to think of *Rereading America* as a handbook that helps students explore the ways that the dominant culture shapes their ideas, values, and beliefs.

This notion of cultural dominance is studiously avoided in most recent multicultural anthologies. “Salad bowl” readers generally sidestep the issue of cultural dynamics: intent on celebrating America’s cultural diversity, they offer a relatively static picture of a nation fragmented into a kind of cultural archipelago. “Talk show” readers admit the idea of conflict, but they distort the reality of cultural dynamics by presenting cultural conflicts as a matter of rational—and equally balanced—debate. All of the materials anthologized in *Rereading America* address the cultural struggles that animate American society—the tensions that result from the expectations established by our dominant cultural myths and the diverse realities that these myths often contradict.

Ultimately, *Rereading America* is about resistance. In this new edition we continue to include readings that offer positive alternatives to the dilemmas of cultural conflict. To make this commitment to resistance as visible as possible, we’ve tried to conclude every chapter of this new edition with a suite of readings offering creative and, we hope, empowering examples of Americans who work together to redefine our national myths.

Extensive Apparatus *Rereading America* offers a wealth of features to help students hone their analytic abilities and to aid instructors as they plan class discussions, critical thinking activities, and writing assignments. These include:

- *A Comprehensive Introductory Essay* The book begins with a comprehensive essay, “Thinking Critically, Challenging Cultural Myths,” that introduces students to the relationships between thinking, cultural diversity, and the notion of dominant cultural myths, and shows how such myths can influence their academic performance. We’ve also included a section devoted to active reading, which offers suggestions for prereading, prewriting, note taking, text marking, and keeping a reading journal. Another section helps students work with the many visual images included in the book.
- *New “Fast Facts” Begin Each Chapter* Several provocative statistics before each chapter introduction provide context for students and prompt discussion. For example, “Roughly 35 million Americans (one in eight) live below the government’s official poverty line.”
- *Detailed Chapter Introductions* An introductory essay at the beginning of each chapter offers students a thorough overview of each cultural myth, placing it in historical context, raising some of the chapter’s central questions, and orienting students to the chapter’s internal structure.
- *Prereading Activities* Following each chapter introduction you’ll find prereading activities designed to encourage students to reflect on what they already know about the cultural myth in question. Often connected

to the images that open every chapter, these prereading activities help students to engage the topic even before they begin to read.

- *Questions to Stimulate Critical Thinking* Three groups of questions following each selection encourage students to consider the reading carefully in several contexts: “Engaging the Text” focuses on close reading of the selection itself; “Exploring Connections” puts the selection into dialogue with other selections throughout the book; “Extending the Critical Context” invites students to connect the ideas they read about here with sources of knowledge outside the anthology, including library research, personal experience, interviews, ethnographic-style observations, and so forth. As in past editions, we’ve included a number of questions linking readings with contemporary television shows and feature films for instructors who want to address the interplay of cultural myths and the mass media.
- *New “Further Connections” Close Each Chapter* These questions and assignments help students make additional connections among readings. They also provide suggestions for exploring issues through research and include ideas for community projects.
- *An Extensive Instructor’s Manual Resources for Teaching REREADING AMERICA* provides detailed advice about ways to make the most of both the readings and the questions; it also offers further ideas for discussion, class activities, and writing assignments, as well as practical hints and suggestions that we’ve garnered from our own classroom experiences.
- *Online Resources* The Top Links Web site for *Rereading America* contains annotated research links. For more information, visit bedfordstmartins.com/rereadingamerica to explore this site and other helpful electronic resources for both students and instructors.

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Critical thinking is always a collaborative activity, and the kind of critical thinking involved in the creation of an anthology like *Rereading America* represents collegial collaboration at its very best. Since publication of the last edition, we’ve heard from instructors across the country who have generously offered suggestions for new classroom activities and comments for further refinements and improvements. Among the many instructors who shared their insights with us as we reworked this edition, we’d particularly like to thank the following: José Amaya, Iowa State University; Michael A. Arnzen, Seton Hill University; Alvin Clarke, Iowa State University; Scott DeShong, Quinebaug Valley Community College; Stephen Evans, University of Kansas; Irene Faass, Iowa State University; Eileen Ferretti, Kingsborough Community College; Susan E. Howard, University of Houston, Downtown; Emily

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The myth of the model family as visualized by America's most popular
illustrator.

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"For weeks I had drunk Kool-Aid and watched morning reruns of
Father Knows Best, whose family was so uncomplicated in its routine
that I very much wanted to imitate it. The first step was to get my
brother and sister to wear shoes at dinner."

<i>What We Really Miss About the 1950s</i> STEPHANIE COONTZ	31
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"What most people really feel nostalgic about . . . is the belief that the
1950s provided a more family-friendly economic and social environ-
ment, an easier climate in which to keep kids on the straight and nar-
row, and above all, a greater feeling of hope for a family's long-term
future, especially for its young."

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MELVIN DIXON

"Francine say she gonna send this quilt to Washington
like folks doing from all 'cross the country,
so many good people gone. Babies, mothers, fathers
and boys like our Junie. . . ."

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ROGER JACK

"Finally it got so I didn't worry as much about the folks at home. I
would be out walking in the evening and know someone else's pres-
ence was with me."

From Changing American Families 61

JUDY ROOT AULETTE

"The stratification systems of class, race ethnicity, and gender consti-
tute a major feature of the macro level of social organization in our
society. They exist beyond the control of any individual and are so per-
vasive they sometimes become invisible."

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"In a society in which the liberal understanding of marriage becomes
the law of the land, divorce would not only be the norm rather than the
exception, but the institution of marriage would disappear altogether."

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"Exclusion from the freedom to marry unfairly punishes committed
same-sex couples and their families by depriving them of critical assis-
tance, security, and obligations in virtually every area of life, including,
yes, even death and taxes."

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HORACE MANN

“Education, then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men, — the balance-wheel of the social machinery.”

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MICHAEL MOORE

“A nation that not only churns out illiterate students BUT GOES OUT OF ITS WAY TO REMAIN IGNORANT AND STUPID is a nation that should not be running the world — at least not until a majority of its citizens can locate Kosovo (or any other country it has bombed) on the map.”

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“School has done a pretty good job of turning our children into addicts, but it has done a spectacular job of turning our children into children.”

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“... I was placed in the vocational track, a euphemism for the bottom level. Neither I nor my parents realized what this meant.”

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“... public schools in complex industrial societies like our own make available different types of educational experience and curriculum knowledge to students in different social classes.”

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RICHARD RODRIGUEZ

"For although I was a very good student, I was also a very bad student. I was a 'scholarship boy,' a certain kind of scholarship boy. Always successful, I was always unconfident."

Para Teresa 206

INÉS HERNÁNDEZ-ÁVILA

"... we were not only equal but superior to them. That was why I studied. If I could do it, we all could."

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"My homemade education gave me, with every additional book that I read, a little more sensitivity to the deafness, dumbness, and blindness that was afflicting the black race in America."

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"Valuing attack as a sign of respect is part of the argument culture of academia — our conception of intellectual interchange as a metaphorical battle."

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"It is not fair that other kids have a garden and new things. But we don't have that. . . . I wish that this school was the most beautiful school in the whole why world."

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"... Ragged Dick. You must drop that name, and think of yourself now as' — 'Richard Hunter, Esq.' said our hero, smiling. 'A young gentleman on the way to fame and fortune.'"

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TONI CADE BAMBARA

"Equal chance to pursue happiness means an equal crack at the dough, don't it?"

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HARLON L. DALTON

"... the Alger myth ... serves to maintain the racial pecking order. It does so by mentally bypassing the role of race in American society."

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"... I have lobbed a loud salvo by declaring myself the Black Avenger, standing tall to dispel the Myth of the Hobbled Black. I am standing up to put an end to the decades of liberal propaganda which deny that today opportunity exists for any American man or woman willing to pursue it."

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"I had gone into this venture in the spirit of science, to test a mathematical proposition, but somewhere along the line, in the tunnel vision imposed by long shifts and relentless concentration, it became a test of myself, and clearly I have failed."

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"From cradle to grave, class standing has a significant impact on our chances for survival."

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DANA GIOIA

"Chock it up, fork it over,
shell it out. Watch it
burn holes through pockets."

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SHARON OLDS

"Suddenly I see that I have thought that it could not
happen to me, homelessness"