



Fields of Writing

Readings Across the Disciplines



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FIELDS OF --- WRITING

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For Instructors

From start to finish, our goal in *Fields of Writing* has been to produce a composition reader that is truly cross-curricular. A quick glance at the table of contents, for example, will reveal the breadth of its subject matter, which covers topics ranging from the Egyptian pyramids to *Star Wars*, from the bubonic plague of the fourteenth century to contemporary causes of environmental stress, from the evolution of language to the theory of relativity. But we have not been content to go after curricular variety in a casual or haphazard way. We have confined ourselves only to material that is genuinely disciplined—that is well informed, well developed, and well written. And we have drawn this material equally from the arts and humanities, from the social sciences and public affairs, and from the sciences and technologies. Thus, you will find in this collection a balanced spread of writing that reflects the major areas of the curriculum in both their academic and applied forms.

Our commitment to well-informed writing has led us to feature the work of persons who are major scholars and thinkers in their fields—Goodall and Mead in anthropology, Thurow and Smith in economics, Carr and Tuchman in history, Freud and Piaget in psychology, Darwin and Eiseley in the biological sciences, Einstein and Oppenheimer in the physical sciences. Our commitment to provide models of writing has also led us to include pieces that represent major forms of composition across the curriculum, such as reviews, case studies, policy statements, position papers, and research reports. Overall, then, our selections are as various in subject, form, and purpose as are the many different kinds of reading that students actually encounter—and the many different kinds of writing they are actually expected to produce—in the many different areas of undergraduate education. As various, too, as the different kinds of reading and writing they are likely to carry on in the world outside the classroom.

We have organized our collection according to four broad rhetorical categories—"Reporting," "Explaining," "Arguing," and "Reflecting"—which constitute aims of writing that are integral to the work of virtually every academic or professional area. In every field, persons need to convey information (reporting), to make sense of information (explaining), to debate controversial ideas and issues (arguing), and to contemplate past experience and knowledge (reflecting). Within each of these four categories, we have grouped the selections

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according to three broad curriculum areas—"Arts and Humanities," "Social Sciences and Public Affairs," and "Sciences and Technologies." This combined system of organization will enable you to identify and consider selections both in terms of their rhetorical purpose and in terms of their curricular affiliation.

To explain these important frameworks for reading and writing, we have discussed them in our general introduction, "For Students," as well as in the more detailed introductions to each of the four main sections, "Reporting," "Explaining," "Arguing," and "Reflecting." These sectional introductions, which are illustrated with passages from the anthologized readings, define each type of writing, discuss its relevance within a broad range of fields, compare and contrast its use in differing fields and situations, as well as identify and explain methods of achieving its aims. Thus, the introductions show, for example, how description and narration are basic in reporting or how analogy, comparison and contrast, definition, and illustration are basic in explaining.

The concepts and terms that figure in the sectional introductions are, in turn, applied throughout the remainder of our editorial apparatus. So, you will find that our headnote for each piece identifies, and where necessary explains, the professional field of its author and the rhetorical context or source of its original publication. Likewise, our questions following each selection call for reading and writing that relate form and style to purpose, subject, and academic field. Beyond these highly focussed questions following each piece, you will find a more broadly based set of "Writing Suggestions" at the end of each main section. These assignments bring together two or more pieces from a particular section, relating them in terms of an academic, professional, personal, or rhetorical topic. And at the end of the collection, you will find our most spacious and challenging set of ideas for composition, "Suggestions for Writing Across the Disciplines." These assignments offer opportunities to pull together several readings and encourage the exploration of broad issues, questions, and problems that are of concern in every academic and professional field.

Because the material in this collection is intended to help students develop their reading and writing abilities, we have prepared two appendices that offer special guidance in these areas. "Reading and Rereading" explains the important relationship between reading and writing and illustrates several approaches to reading, focusing on an essay by E. B. White. "Writing and Rewriting," in turn, explains and illustrates the composing process through a detailed discussion of the same essay by White, including the previously unpublished notes and drafts that White prepared in the process of writing the piece. These appendices, then, are meant to present reading and writing not in abstract terms, but through examples that demonstrate what is actually involved in each activity.

As you look through our table of contents, you will probably notice that pieces that are related in subject or theme have been placed side by side. These relationships, of course, cut across individual sections as well, so we have high-

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lighted them all in a "Topical Guide to the Contents," making it possible to approach the readings in terms of particular subjects of study or themes of interest. We have also put together a "Rhetorical Index" that takes into account all of the rhetorical aims and modes that are discussed in our critical apparatus. Thus, our collection has been designed to serve a full range of approaches to reading and writing across the disciplines.

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A reader of this size and complexity is invariably a collaborative undertaking—and not just among the persons whose names appear on the cover. So we have a number of people to thank for helping us make our way across the disciplines.

For their expert reviews of the organization, table of contents, and critical apparatus, we are grateful to Professors Toby Fulwiler (University of Vermont), Frank Hubbard (University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee), Malcolm Kiniry (University of California, Los Angeles), Linda Robertson (Wichita State University), Christopher Thaiss (George Mason University), and Stephen Witte (University of Texas). For their knowledgeable suggestions of readings to consider, we are grateful to Deborah Asher (Union County College), James Farber (Bell Labs), Miriam Gilbert (University of Iowa), Antonia Hamilton (Hansen, Lind, Meyer Architects), James Hanlon (Shippensburg State College), Patrick Hays (Bell Labs), Marshall H. Klaus (Michigan State University Medical School), Susan Long (Bell Labs), Donald McQuade (Queens College, CUNY), JoAnn Putnam-Scholes (Barrington, Rhode Island), Elizabeth Robertson (University of Iowa), and Steven Weiland (National Federation of State Humanities Boards). For their expert consultation on technical matters in their particular fields, we are grateful to Professors Keith Marshall (University of Iowa—Anthropology), James Spaziani (University of Iowa—Zoology), and James Van Allen (University of Iowa—Astronomy). For their special insights as students, we are grateful to Hilary Broadbent (Barnard College) and Geoffrey Soriano (Brown University). For their discerning reactions to draft versions of the introductory sections, we are grateful to Kate Franks (Iowa City) and Professor Nancy Jones (University of Iowa). For her assistance in preparing material for a segment of the Instructor's Manual, we are grateful to Nancy Moore (University of Iowa), and for her assistance in procuring material for one of the appendices, we are grateful to Carol Singley (Brown University). For their generous assistance in reading proof, we are grateful to Cynthia Putnam (Barrington, Rhode Island) and Richard Putnam (Barrington, Rhode Island). For her thoughtful editing of the manuscript, we are grateful to Marcia Muth. For their excellent work in bringing this book into print, we are grateful to the staff of St. Martin's Press, especially Mark

For Instructors

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N.R.C.
D.H.
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R.S.
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For Students

Fields of Writing: Readings Across the Disciplines has been designed to reflect the broad areas of study and writing you are likely to discover as you begin to acquaint yourself with academic life at your school. Our collection of material, like your introductory college English course itself, is intended to help you develop the abilities in reading and writing that you will need as you move from one course to another, one field of study to another, throughout your college career. In some senses, of course, all areas of study will expect the same things of you—namely, close and careful reading as well as clear and exact writing, with an attentiveness above all to information and ideas. But as you will discover, the particular kinds of information, ideas, and concerns that distinguish each field of study also call for somewhat different reading and writing abilities. As you might imagine, for example, a book report for a literature course requires a different form and style from a lab report in physics. So, in putting together this collection, we have tried to give you a sampling of the varied fields of writing you are likely to encounter in the academic world.

Most undergraduate schools are organized around some version of the traditional division of studies into “the humanities,” “the social sciences,” and “the sciences.” The humanities generally include fields of learning that are thought of as having a cultural orientation, such as language, literature, history, philosophy, and religion. The social sciences, including such fields as anthropology, economics, education, political science, psychology, and sociology, deal with social institutions and their members, analyzing the functions of larger and smaller groups in relation to each other. The sciences generally include fields of knowledge that are concerned with the natural and physical world, such as astronomy, botany, chemistry, physics, and zoology.

These traditional divisions of study are not entirely stable. History and psychology, just to name two, are often regarded as a social science and a science respectively, rather than as a humanity and a social science. Workers in many fields will migrate from one broad area of learning to another, according to the orientation of their own studies on particular occasions. Moreover, these traditional divisions of study are closely affiliated with applied areas of work and study that exist not only in colleges and universities but also in the professional world outside higher education. The humanities, for example, are closely af-

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filiated with the arts; the social sciences, with public affairs such as business and government; and the sciences, with technology. So, if you look through the table of contents, you will find that we have used these basic divisions and clusterings of fields as a major organizing principle of our book. So, too, for this reason have we called it *Fields of Writing*.

An introductory college writing course attentive to these “fields of writing” would probably attempt to work through a variety of academic writing systematically. Such a course would be concerned, no doubt, with examining both boundaries and continuities among these fields. One element of writing that continues from history to business to physics, for example, is the purpose of the writer who is responsible for a given piece of work. Few people write without purpose. Purposes, naturally, are always complex, too complex to unravel completely and to restrict to a single idea. Nevertheless, we can imagine a great deal about the intentions and motivations that guide a particular writer at work on a particular essay, and we can say something about the purpose that writer shows. By focusing on those purposes, no matter how fuzzy they may be around the edges, we begin to see important ways by which writings from all areas of learning relate to each other.

Thus, in organizing the readings in this anthology, we have subordinated areas of academic specialization—Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences and Public Affairs, Sciences and Technologies—to the *purposes* of writing that we wish to define and come to understand better.

Reporting, Explaining, Arguing, and Reflecting—the titles of the primary sections of this reader—are the names that seem to indicate best the purposes we wish to isolate for your consideration. Of course these purposes overlap and are impossible to keep wholly apart from each other. Even so they form an idealized sequence of mental events by which we can consider the varying relations of writer to subject to audience.

Think of all writing, for a moment, as following from a certain amount of investigation, from some process by which the writer becomes familiar with the material at hand. And, to make matters as concrete as possible, think further of that investigation as being analogous to the physical exploration of a new territory or a new world. “Reporting,” then, would correspond to our early contact with the unfamiliar territory. In those reports we describe our arrival, our getting acquainted with the place, our discovering terms by which to know it, and our establishing a working relation to the territory we have decided to explore.

That stage of initial investigation can continue indefinitely, but at some point we will discover that we have become familiar with an area, that in some sense we have settled in. “Explaining” is the writing we are most likely to produce when we have reached the stage of settler rather than explorer. By the time we are able to explain the place, we will have answered a certain number of early questions. We will have established boundaries, defined landmarks, and accom-

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modated ourselves to any earlier inhabitants. Now we are able to record our more detailed understanding of place and circumstance. We are in possession of information unknown to others. We are the ones, after all, who have done the work of settling in, and we seek to make our expertise, our familiarity with things, clear.

To carry this metaphor a step further, we must imagine confronting a rival settler, someone who presumes to know our territory as well as we do, someone who challenges our claim to possession of the place. That rival has come up with an alternative explanation, no doubt. “Arguing,” then, is the process of contesting rival understandings. When we argue, we dig in deeper; we entrench ourselves against counterattack; we consider carefully the rival explanation while striving to defend our own. Of course, we hope to demonstrate the superiority of our own understanding, but a degree of compromise may be necessary. When that is the case, the territory will need to be redefined.

Assuming some success in that idealized sequence of mental events—the steps of exploring, settling into, and defending territory we have chosen to make our own—it is likely that we would want to step back, eventually, and consider the meaning of our achievement. Hence the stage of “Reflecting” placed at the end of this sequence. Reflection comes after struggle and conflict; it follows from extended experience and a certain amount of adjusting to what we have encountered. If one were to *begin* a writing course with “Reflecting,” it would have to be with reflection upon work and experience that had occurred outside the course. “Reflecting” is the mirror image of “Reporting,” and through it we are likely to come to different terms with our experience than we had known.

Clearly, these stages of learning and writing don’t exist as absolute divisions among purposes for writing anywhere except in a textbook. In this text, you will undoubtedly find evidence of “explaining” in essays labelled “argument,” or “reflecting,” or even “reporting.” In some cases, you may even feel certain that an essay would have been better placed in a different section of the reader. We hope that won’t happen often, for we feel confident of the reasons that led us to place most pieces where they are. More important, we are confident that you will find these stages useful to consider separately. They seem to us the natural stages of learning, and insofar as writing depends on learning, insofar, in fact, as the two are intertwined, they seem to us the natural stages of writing as well. Furthermore, these purposes establish continuities within the variety of this reader. Understanding them will give you access to a wider range of written work.

One thing a systematic study of academic writing surely challenges is your inclination for one topic and hesitation toward another. This reader includes writing on many different subjects. Of course, you won’t instantly like it all or be ready for all of it either. The range of difficulty varies, and your preparedness for different topics will vary at least as much. One reason, then, for our organizing this reader as we have and for our stressing these stages of learning and

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purposes for writing throughout is that those ideas should make the more difficult essays on less familiar topics more accessible to you. They can give you a purpose for reading that does not depend on your mastery of the subject being discussed.

Each section of this reader begins with an essay on “Reporting,” “Explaining,” “Arguing,” or “Reflecting” that explains in far more detail than would be useful here that stage of learning and purpose for writing as we understand it. Each essay within each section is accompanied by a brief headnote, explanatory footnotes when necessary, and a set of questions for study and writing. There are also brief sections “On Reading” and “On Writing” and separate sets of writing suggestions that are addressed to more than one essay, sometimes to more than a single writing purpose. All this apparatus is meant to help you further. The rest is up to you, to your classmates, and to your instructor. We hope you will find *Fields of Writing* and the course it suggests useful to the purpose we suppose you have of becoming a more effective college writer.