

# HISTORY Writing & Reading Across the Curriculum

Laurence Behrens • Leonard J. Rosen

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# Writing and Reading Across the Curriculum

Third Edition

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**SCOTT, FORESMAN AND COMPANY**

*Glenview, Illinois    Boston    London*

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Behrens, Laurence.

Writing and reading across the curriculum.

Includes bibliographies.

1. College readers. 2. English language--Rhetoric.  
3. Interdisciplinary approach in education. I. Rosen,  
Leonard J. II. Title.

PE1417.B396 1987 808'.0427 87-23559  
ISBN 0-673-39765-3

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1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 - KPF - 93 92 91 90 89 88 87

Printed in the United States of America

# A Note to the Instructor

*Writing and Reading Across the Curriculum*, third edition, is a combination text-anthology designed to help bridge the gap between writing and other disciplines. The anthology is arranged according to subject rather than rhetorical mode; selections reflect the kinds of reading—and the kinds of writing—studied in courses other than freshman composition. Within chapters, selections are also closely related so that students can infer relationships among them.

These relationships allow students to view a particular issue from a number of perspectives. For instance, they can read how a psychologist, a philosopher, and a former counsel to the president of the United States approach the issue of obedience to authority, and how these specialists present their characteristic assumptions and observations about the subject. Students can also practice some essential college-level skills; they will read and summarize an article; they will read several articles on a particular topic and synthesize them in various degrees of complexity; and they will read an article critically and write a critique of it, identifying and discussing the author's (and their own) assumptions.

## **The Organization of this Book**

The third edition of *Writing and Reading Across the Curriculum* is divided into two parts. In the first part, we discuss the skills of summary, synthesis, and critique. Students are taken step-by-step through the process of writing essays based on source material. We provide readings on a diverse range of subjects, and explain how summaries, synthesis, and critiques can be generated from the readings.

The second part consists of eight chapters with related readings on topics such as humor, fairy tales, gender identity, and nuclear war. Part II begins with a short chapter on "The Business of College Sports," which is designed as a transitional unit between Parts I and II. In this chapter, students are guided more extensively than in later chapters toward a critical reading of the selections and toward the writing of a critical essay.

## **A Note on the Third Edition**

In preparing the current edition, we have tried to retain the essential character of the text while providing enough new material to keep the book fresh and timely.

Those familiar the second edition of *Writing and Reading Across the Curriculum* will have immediately noticed that the current edition is about two hundred pages longer. While the total number of chapters remains the same (eleven in each case), we have increased the number of selections in most chapters, both to allow each subject to be viewed from a broader range of perspectives, and to allow the instructor a greater degree of selection in each chapter.

Chapter 1 on "Summary" has been reduced in length, and Chapters 2 and 3, on "Synthesis" and "Critique," respectively, have been entirely rewritten for greater clarity. In particular, we now place emphasis on two main types of synthesis: the description synthesis and the argument synthesis. Readings on the early part of the Vietnam war are used as sources for the model student essays developed in this chapter. The chapter on "Critique" draws on a variety of readings for purposes of demonstration, including Caroline Bird's controversial essay, "College Is a Waste of Time and Money."

Part II consists of eight chapters. The first chapter, "The Business of College Sports" (consisting of four readings—three of which appeared in the context of a longer chapter in the second edition), serves as a transitional chapter that demonstrates, with extensive explanations to students, how the skills of summary, synthesis, and critique discussed in Part I may be applied to the type of readings that comprise the rest of the book. Of the remaining chapters, four have been extensively revised from the second edition ("Morality and the Movies," "Obedience to Authority," "Fairy Tales: A Closer Look at 'Cinderella'," and "Nuclear War") and three are new to this edition ("Varieties of Humor," "Gender Identity," and "International Terrorism").

Also new to this edition are five appendices following the subject chapters. These appendices—treating thesis statements, introductions and conclusions, and quoting and citing sources—supplement the instructional material in the first three chapters. In Appendix E, Swift's "A Modest Proposal" is reprinted so that students can read the source of inspiration for Alan Lightman's "A Modest Proposal" in the "Nuclear War" chapter.

We encourage all users—students and teachers—of *Writing and Reading Across the Curriculum* to continue to send to the publisher their suggestions for improving the book and their evaluations of its effectiveness. In particular, we invite teachers to submit copies of especially successful student essays based on material in this text for possible inclusion in the Instructor's Manual for the next edition.

### Acknowledgments

It is a pleasure to thank colleagues and friends who first directed us to some of the readings, provided access to their personal libraries, offered

suggestions and moral support, and read and commented upon drafts of the manuscript: Bill Leap, Jack Jorgens, Rudolph von Abele, Kermit Moyer, Tom Cannon, and Jane Stanhope—all of American University. Thanks also to Judith Kirscht, Tom Steiner, and Lee Anne Kryder, of the University of California, Santa Barbara, and to Alice Falk of Indiana University, and Carole K. Brown of Moravian College, who wrote to us about their experiences with the second edition. Thanks to Eugene Narrett of Bentley College. Thanks to the many students of our composition courses who field tested much of the material here and let us know when we hadn't made things clear. We are particularly appreciative of those who responded to our questionnaires, commenting on the previous edition and offering suggestions for this one, including: Linda Borgsdorf, University of Michigan; Alice E. Sink, High Point College; Diane Barker, Kansas State University; Marietta Patrick, Eastern Kentucky University, Jon C. Burton, Northern Virginia Community College; Gretchen L. Flesher, University of Utah; Edward J. Piacentino, High Point College; Dan Ort, Southern Connecticut State University; Robin W. Erwin, Jr., Niagara University; David Nelson, University of Hawaii at Manoa; David L. Lindstrom, Colorado State University; Laura Armesto, Barry University; John Lundquist, Golden West College; Nadene A. Keene, Indiana University; Jeff Stiker, Lewis University; M. B. King Susan McClure, Indiana University of Pennsylvania; Allan Zipf, Arizona State University; John T. Dever, Thomas Nelson Community College; Patricia Walter, Eastern New Mexico University; Suzanne Shippey, Bowling Green State University; B. Calabrese, Sacred Heart University; Nancy Malone, Mattatuck Community College; Joan Seliger Sidney, University of Hawaii at Manoa; Mark Hedborn, Northern Illinois University; Thomas Grant, University of Hartford; Nancy A. Mower, University of Hawaii; Patricia Kolonosky, Kansas State University; R. H. Byrns, Chabot College; Janet K. Patlow, St. John Fisher College; R. Prince, Lewis University; Gratia Murphy, Youngstown State University; George Mower, Allegheny Campus Community College of Allegheny County; John Brereton, University of Massachusetts at Boston; Alan MacGregor, University of Hawaii at Manoa; and Helen Metcalfe, Eastern Nazarene College. Finally, our special gratitude to the splendid crew at Scott Foresman/Little Brown—particularly, Joe Opiela and Nan Upin.

# A Note to the Student

Your psychology professor assigns you to write a critical report on a recently published book on human motivation. You are expected to consult additional sources, such as book reviews and related material on the subject.

Your professor is making a number of critical assumptions about your capabilities. Among them:

- that you can read and comprehend college-level material
- that you can synthesize separate pieces of related material
- that you can intelligently respond to such material

In fact, these same assumptions underlie practically all college writing assignments. Your professors will expect you to demonstrate that you can read and understand not only textbooks, but also critical articles and books, primary sources, and other material related to a subject of study. For instance: In researching a paper on the Great Depression, you might read the historical survey you find in your history text, a speech by President Roosevelt reprinted in the *New York Times*, and a first-hand account of the people's suffering by someone who toured the country during the 1930s and witnessed harrowing scenes of poverty and despair. In a political science paper you might discuss the concept of "executive privilege" in light of James Madison's Federalist Paper No. 51 on the proposed Constitutional provision for division of powers among the three branches of government. In a sociology paper you might undertake a critical analysis of your assigned text, which happens to be Marxist.

The subjects are different, of course; but the skills you need to work with them are the same. You must be able to read and comprehend. You must be able to perceive the relationships among several pieces of source material. And you must be able to apply your own critical judgments to these various materials.

*Writing and Reading Across the Curriculum* provides you with the opportunity to practice the three, essential, college-level skills we have just outlined and the forms of writing associated with them, namely:

- the *summary*
- the *synthesis*
- the *critique*

This text is divided into chapters, such as "The Business of College Sports," "Morality and the Movies," and "International Terrorism," which are comprised of the types of selections you will be asked to read in other courses. In "Obedience to Authority," for example, you will find a description of the famous Milgram experiment (which demonstrated that "ordinary" Americans can be intimidated by authority figures into inflicting unbearable pain on other people); three reviews of Milgram's work; an account—and an explanation—of how obedience led to a massacre in Vietnam; a theory on obedience and decision-making in government and business; and reflections on what some see as the unhealthy obedience of students today.

Various sets of questions following the readings will allow you to practice typical college writing assignments. Writing Suggestions ask you for personal, sometimes imaginative responses to the readings. Synthesis Activities near the end of each chapter allow you to practice assignments of the type that are covered in detail in the first three chapters of this book. For instance, you may be asked to *describe* the Milgram experiment, and the reactions to it, or to *compare* and *contrast* a controlled experiment to a real life or a dramatic situation. Research Topics at the end of each chapter allow you to pursue in greater detail the subjects covered in the chapter, using sources that you find.

Our selection of passages includes articles written by economists, sociologists, psychologists, physicians, folklorists, diplomats, historians, and specialists from other fields. Our aim is that you become familiar with the various subjects and styles of academic writing and that you come to appreciate the interrelatedness of knowledge. Sociologists, historians, and novelists have different ways of contributing to our understanding of gender identity. Fairy tales can be studied by literary critics, folklorists, psychologists, and feminists. Don't assume that the novel you read in your literature course has nothing to do with an assigned article from your economics course. Human activity and human behavior are classified into separate subjects only for convenience.

We hope, therefore, that your composition course will serve as a kind of bridge to your other courses, and that as a result of this work you can become more skillful at perceiving relationships among diverse topics. Because it involves such critical and widely applicable skills, your composition course may well turn out to be one of the most valuable, and one of the most interesting, of your academic career.

# Contents

## PART I HOW TO WRITE SUMMARIES, SYNTHESSES, AND CRITIQUES 1

### 1. Summary 3

Introduction 3

What Is a Summary? 3

Using the Summary 3

How to Write Summaries 4

Demonstration: Summary 6

□ ONE WORLD, ONE LANGUAGE: *Ralph E. Hamil* 6

Reread, Label, Underline, Divide into Stages of Thought 11

Write a One-Sentence Summary of Each Stage of Thought 14

Write a Thesis: A One- or Two-Sentence Summary of  
the Entire Passage 14

Write the First Draft of the Summary 15

Summary 1: Combine a Thesis with One-Sentence

Section Summaries 15

Summary 2: Combine a Thesis Sentence, Section Summaries, and  
Carefully Chosen Details 16

Discussion 18

### 2. Synthesis 20

Introduction 20

What Is a Synthesis? 20

Purpose 20

Using Your Sources 21

How to Write Syntheses 22

What Is a College-Level Essay? 23

The Description Synthesis 26

□ THE VIETNAM WAR: *New Columbia Encyclopedia* 27

□ WHITE HOUSE STATEMENT (1963) 29

□ CONGRESS GIVES JOHNSON A BLANK CHECK FOR  
WAR (1964) 30

□ PRESIDENT JOHNSON STATES HIS WAR AIMS  
(1965) 32

□ PRESIDENT JOHNSON DEFENDS THE BOMBING  
(1967) 33

Consider Your Purpose 34

Formulate a Thesis	35
Decide How You Will Use Your Source Material	36
Develop an Organizational Plan	36
Write the Topic Sentences	37
Write Your Synthesis	37
Discussion	40
The Argument Synthesis	41
<input type="checkbox"/> A WAR OF ATROCITIES (1966)	42
<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC HEARINGS IN WISCONSIN (1965)	43
<input type="checkbox"/> THE AMERICANIZATION OF SOUTH VIETNAM (1965 AND AFTER)	45
<input type="checkbox"/> THE CHINESE SIDE: <i>Arthur Schlesinger</i> (1965)	45
<input type="checkbox"/> THE SLAUGHTER GOES ON: <i>The New Republic</i> (1968)	47
Consider Your Purpose	49
Formulate a Thesis	49
Decide How You Will Use Your Source Material	50
Develop an Organizational Plan	50
Write Your Synthesis	51
Discussion	55
Techniques for Developing Your Papers	57
Summary	57
Example or Illustration	57
Two (or more) Reasons	57
Strawman	58
Concession	58
Comparison and Contrast	59
Organizing by Summary	59
Organizing by Criteria	60
The Johnson-Ho Chi Minh Interchange	58
<input type="checkbox"/> THE JOHNSON LETTER TO HANOI (1967)	60
<input type="checkbox"/> HO CHI MINH'S REPLY (1967)	62
Organization by Summary	64
Discussion	66
Organization by Criteria	66
Discussion	69

### 3. Critical Reading and Critique 71

#### Critical Reading 71

Question 1: What Is the Author Trying to Accomplish in This Passage?	
How Successful Has the Effort Been?	71
Is the selection intended to inform?	72
Is the information accurate?	72
Is the information significant?	72
Has the author interpreted information fairly?	72
Is the Selection Intended to Persuade?	73
Has the author defined terms carefully?	73

- Has the author used information fairly? 74
- Has the author argued logically? 74
- Is the Selection Intended to Entertain? 76
- Question 2: Do You Agree With the Author? 76
  - Identify points of agreement and disagreement 77
  - Explore the reasons for agreement and disagreement:
  - Evaluate assumptions 77
- Exercise: Making Assumptions Explicit 78
- Critique 81
  - How to Write Critiques 82
- Exercise 82
- ☐ **COLLEGE IS A WASTE OF TIME AND MONEY:**  
*Caroline Bird* 84
  - Points to Consider in an Evaluation of Caroline Bird's "College Is a Waste of Time and Money" 95
  - Discussion 102

## PART II AN ANTHOLOGY OF READINGS 105

### 4. The Business of College Sports: A Practice Unit 107

- ☐ **PLAYING FOR MONEY:** *Grace Lichtenstein* 109
  - Discussion 121
- ☐ **THE RULE DOESN'T KILL THE PROBLEM**  
*Mark Asher* 123
  - Discussion 126
- ☐ **SCENARIO FOR SCANDAL:** *Mark Naison* 127
  - Discussion 134
- ☐ **GATE RECEIPTS AND GLORY:** *Robert M. Hutchins* 136
  - Discussion 146

Planning a Paper 150

### 5. Morality and the Movies 157

- ☒ **THE MOTION PICTURE PRODUCTION CODE**  
 (1930) 158
  - "No picture shall be produced which will lower the moral standard of those who see it," proclaims the first effective Hollywood censorship code.
- ☐ **THE STRUGGLE OVER DOUBLE INDEMNITY:**  
*Murray Schumach* 169
  - Why a best-selling novel could not be filmed for eight years.
- ☒ **THE MOTION PICTURE PRODUCTION CODE**  
 (1968) 172
  - "Censorship is an odious enterprise," says the 1968 code, which instituted our current system.

- THE MOVIE RATING GAME: *Stephen Farber* 177  
An insider's view of how movies are rated: Some censors see themselves as "equal partners with the artist . . ."
- ▣ THE MOVIE RATING SYSTEM NEEDS TO CLEAN UP ITS ACT: *Jack Mathews* 186  
"Dear Mr. Valenti: Your movie rating system is on the loose. Please stop it before it kills again."
- PLUSES AND MINUSES OF FILM RATING:  
*Charles Champlin* 196  
". . . it is probably no bad thing to have a thoughtful and well-intentioned group of disparate individuals trying to understand where community standards are, and being right more often than wrong."
- VIOLENT EROTICA AND THE VICTIMIZATION OF WOMEN: *Elizabeth Rice Allgeier* 200  
Recent experiments indicate that aggressive-erotic films can be dangerous.
- WHERE DO YOU DRAW THE LINE? *Victor B. Cline* 207  
"When does something become obscene? When does it cross that line where society might legitimately object?" Some guidelines are suggested.
- Synthesis Activities 213
- Research Topics 213
- Additional Readings 214

## 6. Obedience to Authority 216

- THE PERILS OF OBEDIENCE: *Stanley Milgram* 217  
"This is, perhaps, the most fundamental lesson of our study: Ordinary people, simply doing their jobs, and without any particular hostility on their part, can become agents in a terrible destructive process."  
Reactions to Milgram's Experiment
- REVIEW OF STANLEY MILGRAM'S EXPERIMENTS ON OBEDIENCE *Richard Herrnstein* 232  
A psychologist admits to misgivings about Milgram's procedures, but concludes that "a small temporary loss of a few people's comfort seems a bearable price for a large reduction in ignorance. . . ."
- REVIEW OF STANLEY MILGRAM'S EXPERIMENTS ON OBEDIENCE *Diana Baumrind* 237  
Another psychologist disagrees: "It is important that as research psychologists we protect our ethical sensibilities rather than [ support ] . . . the kind of indignities to which Milgram's subjects were exposed."
- REVIEW OF STANLEY MILGRAM'S EXPERIMENTS ON OBEDIENCE *Philip Meyer* 245  
"It is quite possible that if everyone felt responsible for each of the ultimate consequences of his own tiny contributions to complex chains of events, then society simply would not work."

- ☐ **MASSACRE AT MY LAI, VIETNAM: AN OFFICIAL REPORT:** *Stanley Resor* 249  
The Secretary of the Army in 1969 describes the massacre of civilians at My Lai, Vietnam, by American troops under the command of Lt. Calley, concluding that "what apparently occurred at My Lai [was] wholly unrepresentative of the manner in which our forces conduct military operations."
- ☐ **OBEDIENCE IN VIETNAM:** *Stanley Milgram* 254  
"How is it that a person who is decent, within the course of a few months finds himself killing other men with no limitations of conscience?"
- ☐ **GROUPTHINK:** *Irving L. Janis* 264  
A psychologist demonstrates how concurrence-seeking behavior within groups can lead to flawed and sometimes disastrous decisions.
- ☐ **WHITE HOUSE COUNSEL JOHN DEAN AND THE WATERGATE SCANDAL:** *Max Rosenbaum* 272  
"In his remark at the Waldorf-Astoria a few years ago, John Dean spoke about the ethical issues raised during his tenure at the White House, and about the compunction he felt to conform to the wishes of his superiors. . . ."
- ☐ **FOLLOWING THE LEADER:** *Daniel Goleman* 279  
"Sometimes it's folly to go along with the boss."
- ☐ **MY BUTTONED-DOWN STUDENTS:**  
*Larry J. Crockett* 283  
A professor of religious studies and philosophy fears—and laments—the compliance of his students. What he wants is a "healthy irreverence," but he must settle for classes in which there is rarely "a spirited challenge or a probing question."
- ☐ **WHY JOHNNY CAN'T DISOBEY:**  
*Sarah J. McCarthy* 286  
"Disobedience schools should be at least as common as military schools and reform schools."
- Synthesis Activities 297
- Research Topics 299
- Additional Readings 299

## 7. Varieties of Humor 301

- ☐ **SHORT TAKES** 304  
A potpourri of jokes and anecdotes by Harry Golden, Robert Benchley, Henny Youngman and others.
- ☒ **THE SECRET LIFE OF WALTER MITTY:**  
*James Thurber* 310  
An ordinary, timid man finds relief in daydreams of extraordinary adventure.
- ☐ **FAREWELL, MY LOVELY APPETIZER:**  
*S. J. Perelman* 315  
The great Smorgasbits mystery or, Who put the pink in the herring?

- ☐ **SPRING BULLETIN:** *Woody Allen* 321  
An "uneducated, unextended" adult browses through an imaginary offering of college courses.
- ☐ **A DAY'S WORK:** *Truman Capote* 325  
Truman Capote accompanies Mary Sanchez, a professional cleaning woman, on a day's work.
- ☐ **THE WHITE HOUSE AND MY EMANCIPATION:**  
*Dick Gregory* 338  
A comedian and civil rights activist lends a hand to President Kennedy.
- ☐ **THE SEARCH FOR SIGNS OF INTELLIGENT LIFE IN THE UNIVERSE:** *Jane Wagner* 342  
For Trudy, reality is "absurdity dressed up in a three-piece business suit."
- ☐ **THEORIES OF HUMOR:** *D. H. Monro* 349  
Why do some things strike us as funny? A look at superiority theories, incongruity theories, and relief theories.
- ☐ **HUMOR AS A SOCIAL CORRECTIVE:** *Avner Ziv* 356  
A psychologist contrasts the intent of comedy and satire but concludes that "the two forms together constitute the best illustration there is of the social function of humor."
- ☐ **HUMOR AND FREEDOM:** *John Morreall* 361  
A philosopher asserts that "the person with a sense of humor can never be dominated."
- ☐ **HOW TO BE EXCRUCIATINGLY FUNNY IN SHORTS:** *Robert Fontaine* 373  
A primer on writing and publishing humorous short pieces—with an assurance: "If no one ever buys them you have a lot of droll remarks to make at parties."
- Synthesis Activities 377
- Research Topics 378
- Additional Readings 378

## 8. International Terrorism 380

- ☐ **WHAT IS TERRORISM?** *Brian M. Jenkins* 382  
A survey of contemporary international terrorism.
- ☐ **INTERVIEW WITH ABU NIDAL** 392  
A man held responsible for numerous acts of terrorism discusses the "justified struggle" of the Palestinians: "I can assure you of one thing: if we get the chance to do the slightest damage to America, we will not hesitate to do so."
- ☐ **WINNING THE WAR AGAINST TERRORISTS:**  
*Gayle Rivers* 399  
A counterterrorist offers his view on the terrorists at whom he strikes: "To me, terrorists are like roaches and rats; if we let them proliferate, we will lose the war in which we have been pitted against them . . ."
- ☐ **THE FUTILITY OF TERRORISM:** *Walter Laqueur* 411  
Although terrorism "creates tremendous noise," claims one expert, it

has failed to achieve any of its major goals. "Compared with other dangers threatening mankind, it is almost irrelevant."

- ☐ MYTHS AND REALITIES OF POLITICAL TERRORISM: *Michael Stohl* 421

Discussing the "myths of contemporary political terrorism," Stohl disputes Laqueur and others who claim that terrorism is ineffective.

- ☐ TERRORISM: THE IMMORALITY OF BELIEF: *Alfred Louch* 443

A philosopher considers the question of when, if ever, terrorist acts can be justified. Are we—or our governments—hypocrites in condemning terrorism?

- ☐ THE ROOT CAUSES OF TERRORISM: *Moorhead Kennedy* 453

One of the diplomats held hostage in the American embassy in Iran argues that we must go beyond our violent gut reactions to acts of terrorism and try to understand the grievances of those we call terrorists.

- ☐ TERROR AND PEACE: THE "ROOT CAUSE" FALLACY: *Charles Krauthammer* 465

An essayist and former psychiatrist dismisses the assumptions behind Moorehead Kennedy's essay. Dealing with "root causes" will not end terrorism; instead we must "hunt down today's machine gunners and deter tomorrow's."

- ☐ HOW THE WEST CAN WIN: *Benjamin Netanyahu* 472

The deputy ambassador of Israel to the United States rules out any accommodation with terrorists: "The only sensible policy is a refusal to yield and a readiness to apply force."

Synthesis Activities 493

Research Topics 494

Additional Readings 495

## 9. Fairy Tales: A Closer Look At "Cinderella" 497

- ☐ UNIVERSALITY OF THE FOLKTALE: *Stith Thompson* 499

The "oral art of tale-telling is far older than history, and it is not bounded by one continent or one civilization."

- ☐ THE ISOLATED HERO: *Max Luthi* 503

An author and student of fairy-tale literature examines the characteristics of heroes common to a large number of tales.

- ☒ THE USES OF ENCHANTMENT: *Bruno Bettelheim* 508

The famous psychologist argues that fairy tales "convey the advantages of moral behavior" to children who are "confronted with a complex world with which they must learn to cope."

Seven Variants of 'Cinderella'

- ☐ CINDERELLA: *Charles Perrault* 515

- ☐ ASHPUTTLE: *Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm* 520

- ☐ THE CAT CINDERELLA: *Giambattista Basile* 525

- ☐ THE CHINESE "CINDERELLA": *Tuan Ch'êng-shih* 531
- ☐ WALT DISNEY'S "CINDERELLA":  
*adapted by Campbell Grant* 533
- ☒ CINDERELLA: *Anne Sexton* 535
- ☐ GUDGEKIN THE THISTLE GIRL: *John Gardner* 539
- ☐ "CINDERELLA": A STORY OF SIBLING RIVALRY  
AND OEDIPAL CONFLICTS: *Bruno Bettelheim* 547  
A psychoanalytic reading of "Cinderella": "Every child believes at  
some point in his life . . . that because of his secret wishes, if not also  
his clandestine actions, he deserves to be degraded, banned from the  
presence of others, relegated to a nether world of smut."
- ☐ A CRITIQUE OF BETTELHEIM: *Jack Zipes* 555  
Bettelheim's effort to impose "meaning onto child development  
through the therapeutic use of the folk tale [is] authoritarian and  
unscientific."
- ☐ A FEMINIST'S VIEW OF "CINDERELLA":  
*Madonna Kolbenschlag* 562  
"Like the old conduct manuals for ladies, the moral of the tale warns  
against feminine excursions as well as ambition."
- ☒ AMERICA'S "CINDERELLA": *Jane Yolen* 568  
The well-known author of children's stories laments the "gutting" of  
older versions of "Cinderella" derived from oral tradition, which  
could legitimately instruct young children. Walt Disney's "heresy," by  
contrast, is coy and condescending.
- Synthesis Activities 576
- Research Topics 579
- Additional Readings 579

## 10. Gender Identity: Being Male and Female in America 581

- ☐ THE NEXT GREAT MOMENT IN HISTORY IS THEIRS:  
*Vivian Gornick* 584  
"Let's use our heads for a moment. What on earth is holy about  
motherhood? I mean, why motherhood rather than fatherhood?"
- ☐ THE QUIET MOVEMENT OF AMERICAN MEN:  
*Betty Friedan* 601  
"It's a deceptively quiet movement, a shifting in direction, a saying 'no'  
to old patterns, a searching for new values, a struggling with basic  
questions that each man seems to be dealing with alone."
- ☒ IS THE NEW MAN A WIMP? *Margaret Edwards* 616  
The new man, who's capable of sensitive introspection and who can  
bake a terrific quiche, may have become incapable of lasting commit-  
ment. Has he turned into a "wormboy," a wimp?
- ☐ THE BALANCE OF POTENCY: *George F. Gilder* 622  
Because men cannot bear and suckle children, they feel themselves  
irrelevant after the first act of procreation; they must therefore strive  
to prove themselves in the world outside of the family.

□ **ANDROGYNY AS AN IDEAL FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT:** *Ann Ferguson* 635

"The elimination of sex roles and the development of androgynous human beings is the most rational way to allow for the possibility of, on the one hand, love relationships among equals, and on the other, development of the widest possible range of intense and satisfying social relationships between men and women."

□ **CULTURAL BELIEFS ABOUT GENDER AND WORK:**  
*Barbara F. Reskin and Heidi I. Hartmann* 648

The editors of a study commissioned by the National Research Council explore assumptions about gender identity that lead to sex segregation in the workplace.

□ **CHANGING MEN, CHANGING MARRIAGE:**  
*W. W. Meade* 659

"Because old ways die hard, men have difficulty learning how to love and live with women who take their own careers seriously."

□ **STRATEGIES OF CORPORATE WOMEN:**  
*Barbara Ehrenreich* 666

"A small but significant number of women are deciding not to have it all after all. . . ." Why?

Synthesis Activities 673

Research Topics 674

Additional Readings 674

## 11. Nuclear War 676

□ **HIROSHIMA** *John Hersey* 678

On August 6, 1945, the Reverend Mr. Tanimoto saw a flash of light cut across the sky. His experiences and those of his fellow citizens in Hiroshima during the days that followed are a testament to human courage and endurance.

□ **HEARD ROUND THE WORLD:**  
*The New York Times* 696

"The bomb that dropped on Hiroshima was doubtless heard by human ears for hundreds of miles around, but morally it was heard around the world. . . ." Thus begins the *New York Times* editorial on the day after.

□ **OF ACCIDENTAL JUDGMENTS AND CASUAL SLAUGHTERS:** *Kai Erikson* 698

The decision to drop the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki was never seriously debated: "The decision, to the extent that one can even speak of such a thing, was shaped and seasoned by a force very much like inertia."

□ **SECOND STRIKE:** *Henry Kendall* 711

A nuclear physicist explains how the United States or the Soviet Union could destroy the other—even *after* a devastating first strike.

□ **THE NUCLEAR WINTER:** *Carl Sagan* 723

The consequences of global nuclear war would be more terrible than