

Third Edition

Life Studies

A Thematic Reader

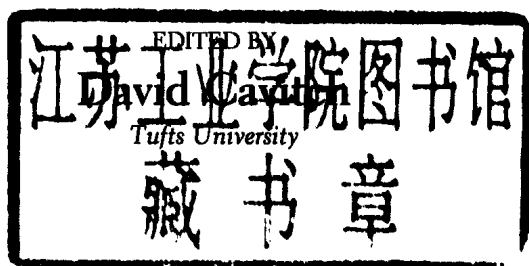


David Cavitch

Life Studies

A THEMATIC READER

THIRD EDITION



A Bedford Book

ST. MARTIN'S PRESS • NEW YORK

For Bedford Books:

Publisher: Charles H. Christensen

Associate Publisher: Joan E. Feinberg

Managing Editor: Elizabeth M. Schaaf

Developmental Editor: Stephen A. Scipione

Copyeditor: Susan Reynolds

Production Editor: Mary Lou Wilshaw

Text Design: Anna Post

Cover Design: Hannus Design Associates

Photo Researcher: Mary Lou Wilshaw

Cover Art: "Paul Kasmin & Jasper Conran, Pembroke Studios, London, 8th May 1982" (Detail), Composite Polaroid, © David Hockney.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 88-70430

Copyright © 1989 by St. Martin's Press, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, except as may be expressly permitted by the 1976 Copyright Act or in writing by the Publisher.

Manufactured in the United States of America.

3 2 1 0 9
f e d c b

For information, write: St. Martin's Press, Inc.
175 Fifth Avenue, New York NY 10019

Editorial Offices: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press,
29 Winchester Street, Boston MA 02116

ISBN: 0-312-01255-1

Part Opening Photographs

Self-Images (page 2): Frank Siteman

Family Ties (page 64): Peter Simon/Stock, Boston

Significant Others (page 152): Steven Stone/The Picture Cube

Group Pictures (page 230): Thomas Hopker/Woodfin Camp

Places (page 320): George Bellerose/Stock, Boston

Possessions (page 402): Bob Ely/Stock, Boston

Aspirations (page 466): Harold M. Lambert/Harold M. Lambert Studios

Dilemmas (page 534): Michael Hayman/Stock, Boston

Acknowledgments

Acknowledgments and copyrights are continued at the back of the book on pages 607-611, which constitute an extension of the copyright page.

TO INSTRUCTORS



This new edition of *Life Studies* reconfirms the premise that students learn to write well when they try to understand things that truly matter to them. Writers learn about themselves and their world by writing attentively, just as artists learn about their subjects by sketching them from different perspectives and in different settings. Hence the title *Life Studies*, for the works included here offer students varied perspectives on topics they care about, encouraging them to read carefully, to respond in class discussions, and to express their feelings and ideas clearly in writing.

The organization of the book into eight thematic sections suggests the growth of human dimensions, treating a progression of experience from personal to general awareness and from concrete to abstract considerations. The topics focus on our self-images, our family relationships, our love for other people outside the family, our behavior in groups, our sense of place, our connection to valued possessions, our aspirations and ambitions, and our moral dilemmas. Each section contains the widest possible variety in views of the topic and in types of writing. The selections are all well written and provocative, and many of them (even those by well-known writers) appear for the first time here in a composition reader along with several classic essays. Each section opens with a number of *Insights* — succinct, often controversial statements by well-known writers whose colloquy of opinions offers a lively approach to the theme. The longer works that follow include contemporary essays, memoirs, speeches, scripture, social criticism, and reportage; the perspectives include those of the journalist, satirist, semiotician, playwright, sociologist, psychologist, and philosopher, among others. In addition to essays, each section also contains at least one short story and poem that develop the theme imaginatively.

To help students appreciate what they read, and especially to generate good writing, *Life Studies* contains detailed and extensive editorial apparatus. Preceding each selection is a biographical and

introductory headnote. Following each selection are pointed questions and feasible writing topics. These lead students to reexamine the selection's concepts and rhetorical methods, and they prompt substantive, intelligent responses in class discussions, in short written exercises, and in longer, more carefully planned essays. Additional writing topics at the end of each thematic section encourage analysis of the *Insights* and further written consideration of the theme. This edition also includes an appendix on reading and writing. The student is offered guidelines for reading with better comprehension, illustrated with specific observations about an annotated sample essay, E. B. White's "Once More to the Lake." A helpful clarification of the themes follows the same essay, and useful procedures for writing about their own responses encourage students to become intelligently involved in their work. A rhetorical index to the selections appears in the back of the book, and a set of *Editor's Notes* offers both suggestions for dealing with each piece and more writing assignments. (The same *Editor's Notes* are also available as part of the instructor's edition, bound into the back of the new edition.) Finally, instructors who taught from the second edition will note that almost half of the selections in the third edition are new, as is a thematic section on "Places," and that there are more *Insights*, more short stories, and a more personal slant to the readings in "Dilemmas." These changes should keep *Life Studies* fresh and imaginative and bring the new edition even closer to student interests and concerns.

Many instructors helped improve this book by responding to a questionnaire for the second edition. I am grateful for the careful consideration given by John H. Adams, Murray State University; Bruce Ballenger, University of New Hampshire; Helen Bauer, Iona College; David Breseke, Brooklyn College; Sister Marie Brintman, Saint Mary College; Maurice Clevering, Saginaw Valley State College; Paul Cody, Cornell University; Mary Lou Crouch, George Mason University; Margaret DelGuerico, Montclair State College; J. Fidler, University of Lowell; Ideale Gambera, City College of San Francisco; Joan Gilson, University of Missouri at Kansas City; Thomas Grant, University of Hartford; Paul D. Green, West Chester University of Pennsylvania; Margaret Hallissy, Long Island University; Calvin Hanrahan, Brenau College; Dorothea R. Hoffner, Union County College; Wilbur Huck, Idaho State University; Barbara Hull, San Jose State University; Claudine Hullskamp, California State University, Fresno; Madelyn Jablon,

Clarion University; Suzanne F. Kistler, William Paterson College; Ann Krabach, California State College, Stanislaus; H. D. Kreilkamp, St. Joseph's College; Carol S. Kushner, Syracuse University; Kenneth MacLean, Seattle University; Pete M. Mann, Wilkes Community College; Christopher Metress, Vanderbilt University; Margaret M. Mizer, Central Arizona College; Brenda S. Morris, University of South Carolina at Union; T. Nelson-Humphries, Cumberland College; Dennis O'Dell, Saginaw Valley State College; Claire Pamplin, Hunter College of CUNY; Marcia Pennington, California State University, Chico; Ann Rayson, University of Hawaii; Dave Redman, Kansas State University; Sister Susan Rieke, Saint Mary College; Carole Robinson, University of Massachusetts at Boston; Theodore J. Ross, Fairleigh Dickinson University, Florham-Madison; Candice Rowe, University of Massachusetts at Boston; Jeanne C. Ryan, Cleveland State University; Helen Sherak, Santa Rosa Junior College; Marvin W. Sherak, Santa Rosa Junior College; Ann Showalter, Gettysburg College; Karen Sookram, Doane College; Warren E. Spehar, Western Connecticut State University; C. W. Spinks, Trinity University; Ellen Sternberg, University of Rochester; Patti Tana, Nassau Community College; Jack Turner, Salisbury State College; Lucilia M. C. Valerio, Tufts University; Billie Varnum-Gallant, Brenau College; F. H. Vaughn, Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania; Stephen Wallin, Clark College; Warren Weinstein, Virginia Commonwealth University; Anita Wilkins, Cabrillo College; Mary Louise Willey, University of Massachusetts at Boston; and Helen Zucker, Oakland University.

The people at Bedford Books provided much support. Jane Betz, Sarah Royston, and Jennifer Sheidley did research, and I am particularly indebted to Julie Shevach, Steve Scipione, Joan Feinberg, associate publisher, and to the publisher, Charles Christensen. Christine Rutigliano obtained permission to publish the selections, and Mary Lou Wilshaw and Elizabeth Schaaf, managing editor, skillfully piloted the endeavor through production.

TO STUDENTS



The title of this book, *Life Studies*, alludes to the series of sketches an artist makes of the human figure. Each selection in this book presents a different perspective on the individual in solitude and in society. Taken together, the selections reveal the complexity of the individual in varied and deep connections with other people and also with objects, ideas, and nonhuman things in the natural world. Like the artist's studies, the essays can open up new ideas about your own and other people's experiences. By writing about the topics you can gain a clearer understanding of what you know and who you are, as the artist gains a clearer understanding of his or her subject by sketching it. Grasping what is important about a subject is a creative activity whether you are gazing or reading, for in both kinds of attentiveness you usually discover what you truly see only by trying to express it on paper — by sketching or by writing.

The selections in *Life Studies* examine matters that are probably important to you. They are organized into eight sections, covering our images of ourselves, our family relationships, our love for other people, our behavior in groups, our sense of place, our connection to valued possessions, our aspirations and ambitions, and our moral dilemmas. Besides offering diverse and fresh perspectives on significant subjects, the readings also present written language of remarkably high quality. Written language is different from spoken language, so it is acquired mainly through extensive reading. The written language is not the spoken "mother tongue" in which we express ourselves easily and directly to others. It is less tied to momentary situations, it is more compact and formal, and it offers a vastly increased vocabulary. In writing we use sentences that are more complex and diversified; even

our thinking changes when we take time to develop precisely what we mean. Learning to write originally and effectively requires practice in reading as well as writing. This book guides you in both activities by providing well-written, interesting selections that suggest writing assignments on stimulating topics.

Whether humorous or solemn about their subject, the authors of the selections considered it important to formulate their viewpoint into words. They tried to be precise in their observations, and they seem to find pleasure — sometimes even great delight — in clarifying and sharing their ideas and feelings about the subject. They discover something through writing about it. By drawing on their experience as well as your own, you too can learn to write well.

CONTENTS



1. *SELF-IMAGES* 3

INSIGHTS: *Susan Sontag, Rom Harre, Helen Keller, Walt Whitman, Mark Twain, Germaine Greer, Rollo May* 4

Nora Ephron SHAPING UP ABSURD 7

A journalist's witty account of feeling tragically misfitted for life by the curse of flat-chestedness.

Terry Galloway I'M LISTENING AS HARD
AS I CAN 16

A theater director and performer describes how as a child she became deaf and the impact it had on her life.

Joan Didion IN BED 23

The chronic suffering brought on by migraine headaches gave this essayist a deluded view of herself until she separated fact from fantasy.

Susan Brownmiller THE CONTRIVED POSTURES
OF FEMININITY 28

A feminist objects that the body language women are expected to learn signifies shame and weakness.

Brent Staples BLACK MEN AND PUBLIC SPACE 34

A young black man explains how it feels to be "ever the suspect, a fearsome entity with whom pedestrians avoid making eye contact."

Louie Crew **THRIVING AS AN OUTSIDER,
EVEN AS AN OUTCAST,
IN SMALLTOWN AMERICA** 38

Through hard work, optimism, and an unflagging conviction of self-worth, a biracial homosexual couple in a small southern town learn to thrive as valued citizens.

Bernard Cooper **BY ANY OTHER NAME** 48

A writer remembers his childhood fascination with names — their power to tease the imagination and conjure identities, including his own.

George MacBeth **MARSHALL** (*poem*) 52

If in a daydream you could be anything, why would you want to be a vegetable — particularly a bean?

James Thurber **THE SECRET LIFE OF
WALTER MITTY** (*story*) 55

Irrepressible dreams of glory guide American literature's most famous nonentity through the dreariness of his day.

Additional Writing Topics 61

2. *FAMILY TIES* 65

INSIGHTS: *Robert Nisbet, Ferdinand Mount, Gloria Emerson, Philip Larkin, C. S. Lewis, Robert Weiss, Philip Slater* 66

Margaret Mead **FAMILY CODES** 70

A famous anthropologist explains that American families vary greatly in codes of behavior and ways of communicating them.

Ella Taylor TV FAMILIES 74

A sociologist explains how television programs such as *The Cosby Show* and *Family Ties* reflect changing attitudes about the American family.

Nancy Friday COMPETITION 87

The author of *My Mother/Myself* describes how the love between a mother and her two daughters is tempered by fierce competition in beauty, intelligence, and accomplishment among all three women.

Donald Barthelme CHABLIS (story) 93

"What's wrong with me? Why am I not a more natural person, like my wife wants me to be?" A perplexed family man ruminates about how he got to be the way he is.

Raymond Carver MY FATHER'S LIFE 97

A successful writer who feels close to working people tries to understand the misfortunes of his ne'er-do-well father.

Adrienne Rich THE ANGER OF A CHILD 107

A poet looks back at the angry, demanding father and the timid mother who dominated her youth.

Leo Rosten HOME IS WHERE TO LEARN
HOW TO HATE 112

We've got to learn somewhere that anger contributes to our sense of right and wrong, says this writer — and there's no better place than among our nearest kin.

Jamaica Kincaid A WALK TO THE JETTY 119

In this autobiographical story, a Caribbean girl can hardly wait to leave her family and island home, but the day of departure changes her attitude.

Calvin Trillin IT'S JUST TOO LATE 131

The increasingly wild and ultimately fatal behavior of a former "perfect child" is chronicled in this report from *The New Yorker*. Many people are responsible for FaNee's tragedy — but who is to blame?

Robert Hayden THOSE WINTER SUNDAYS (*poem*) 142

A poet remembers the weekly ritual that perfectly symbolized his father's lonely devotion to his family.

John Updike STILL OF SOME USE (*story*) 144

A man helps his ex-wife and sons clean out their house on moving day. The artifacts of his former life — toys, games, a kerosene lamp — remind him of all that is over.

Additional Writing Topics 150

3. *SIGNIFICANT OTHERS* 153

INSIGHTS: *La Rochefoucauld, St. John, Walker Percy, Anonymous, Selma Fraiberg, Simone de Beauvoir, Francesco Alberoni, D. H. Lawrence, Erich Fromm, D. T. Suzuki, Zelda Fitzgerald, Benjamin J. Stein* 154

Susan Allen Toth BOYFRIENDS 159

Having a boyfriend was a requirement in high school — but this one was special. An Iowa woman remembers her adolescence in the 1950s.

W. D. Wetherell THE BASS, THE RIVER,
AND SHEILA MANT (*story*) 166

Hooked by an alluring seventeen-year-old and a huge bass all at once, an adolescent boy has to decide which one to cut loose.

Robert Solomon "I-LOVE-YOU" 174

What claims and what challenges do we make when we utter those three daring words? A philosopher considers words as actions.

Barbara Ehrenreich *PLAYBOY JOINS THE BATTLE
OF THE SEXES* 179

A feminist social critic analyzes how the men's magazine became a voice of male rebellion against the responsibilities of marriage.

Raymond Carver *WHAT WE TALK ABOUT WHEN
WE TALK ABOUT LOVE (story)* 189

When the drinks begin to flow, two couples get more and more upset as they try to discuss what real love means.

Sharon Olds *SEX WITHOUT LOVE (poem)* 202

"How do they do it, the ones who make love/without love?" To this stark question a poet offers a chilling answer.

Francine Du Plessix Gray *ON FRIENDSHIP* 204

A novelist and essayist posits that friendship is more satisfying and lasting than romantic love.

Ernest van den Haag *THE INVENTION
THAT ISN'T WORKING* 213

A psychoanalyst argues that we've got the idea of marriage all wrong, and our lives show it.

Lindsay Van Gelder *MARRIAGE AS A
RESTRICTED CLUB* 224

A lesbian journalist appeals for the right to marry her female lover so that she, like members of the heterosexual community, can demonstrate genuine commitment to her partner.

Additional Writing Topics 229

4. **GROUP PICTURES** 231

INSIGHTS: John Donne, Jean-Paul Sartre, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Theodor Reik, W. E. B. DuBois, Oscar Wilde, Alexis de Tocqueville, Judith Martin, Sigmund Freud 232

Edward C. Martin BEING JUNIOR HIGH 237

A teacher examines the anxious desire to belong and the beginnings of confusion about authority that characterize his twelve- to fourteen-year-old students.

Maya Angelou GRADUATION 243

A commencement speaker's prejudice threatens, but cannot destroy, the pride of a black community.

John Cheever **EXPELLED** (*story*) 256

A student examines the unthinking conformity and unquestioned beliefs that governed the students *and* faculty at a prep school from which he has just been expelled.

Maxine Hong Kingston THE MISERY OF
SILENCE 267

The language barrier is the greater wall of China for an immigrant child who attends both Chinese and American schools in a small California city.

Barbara Grizzuti Harrison GROWING UP
APOCALYPTIC 273

A messianic sect's severe dogmas made her early life miserable, says this feminist writer who broke away from one religion to turn to another.

Marc Feigen Fasteau **FRIENDSHIPS
AMONG MEN** **285**

Men form friendships with other men through group activities. This lawyer asks why men avoid more personal companionship.

Peter Marin **HELPING AND HATING THE
HOMELESS** 296

A writer examines society's anger and revulsion in response to the homeless in order to explain why there are no successful programs to help them.

Robert Claiborne **A WASP STINGS BACK** 311

A white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant claims that he suffers from unfair stereotyping as much as any minority group.

W. H. Auden **THE UNKNOWN CITIZEN** (*poem*) 315

A major British poet records how an individual's identity can be lost to a group's expectations.

Additional Writing Topics 317

5. PLACES 321

INSIGHTS: *Marcel Proust, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Cynthia Ozick,
John Berger, George Santayana, Colette, Ralph Waldo
Emerson* 322

Mike Royko **A CLEAN, WELL-LIGHTED
PLACE** 326

A Chicago journalist offers some straight talk about what makes for a good place to have a drink.

Henry David Thoreau **HOW I BUILT MY
HOUSE** 329

One of America's staunchest spokesmen for individualism explains how in building his famous cabin at Walden Pond he also gave shape to his life.

William Butler Yeats THE LAKE ISLE
 OF INNISFREE (*poem*) 338

The Irish poet imagines where and how he might lead a simpler life.

D. H. Lawrence NEW MEXICO 340

A British novelist, famous for his commitment to human passion, discovers in the New Mexican landscape the outlines of a liberating vision of life.

William Severini Kowinski KIDS IN THE MALL:
 GROWING UP
 CONTROLLED 348

A journalist decodes the lessons teenagers learn in shopping malls, the “universities of suburban materialism.”

Umberto Eco THE CITY OF ROBOTS 354

An internationally renowned cultural critic takes a close look at the world of illusion in Disneyland to determine just how wonderful it is.

Ruth Praver Jhabvala MYSELF IN INDIA 363

A Westerner in India looks from the outside in with fascination and horror.

Frederick Douglass GROWING UP ON A
 PLANTATION 373

A runaway slave provides a compelling account of “the hell of slavery” that was his youth.

Ursula K. Le Guin THE ONES WHO WALK
 AWAY FROM OMELAS (*story*) 379

A perfect place to live is Omelas, the “city of happiness” — but there is one important condition.

Annie Dillard TOTAL ECLIPSE 386

An overwhelming encounter with a natural phenomenon on a hill-top by the Yakima Valley engenders in this nature writer a profound and dislocating recognition.

Additional Writing Topics 400

6. POSSESSIONS 403

INSIGHTS: *Matthew, Henry David Thoreau, Henry James, Paul Wachtel, Caskie Stinnett, Thorstein Veblen, John Kenneth Galbraith, Andrew Carnegie, Anonymous* 404

Harry Crews THE CAR 407

A Southern writer recalls the period when his automobiles seemed to organize his activities and define his personality.

J. R. Ackerley MY DOG TULIP 412

The doting owner of a skittish Alsatian learns that he isn't the only possessive one in the relationship.

E. M. Forster MY WOOD 428

An English novelist finds that owning a stretch of forest changes his view of it; being a landowner brings out unwelcome attitudes.

Richard Wilbur A SUMMER MORNING (*poem*) 432

A gardener and cook share the beauty of a country estate while the owners sleep.

William Ryan MINE, ALL MINE 434

A social psychologist finds the whole idea of *ownership* a little incredible.