

**THE**  
x x x  
**NORTON**  
x x x  
**SAMPLER**

Sixth Edition



**SHORT ESSAYS FOR COMPOSITION**

**Thomas Cooley**

# THE NORTON SAMPLER

SHORT ESSAYS FOR COMPOSITION

*Sixth Edition*

XX/

THOMAS COOLEY

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY



W·W·NORTON & COMPANY

NEW YORK · LONDON

Copyright © 2003, 1997, 1993, 1985, 1982, 1979 by W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Since this page cannot legibly accommodate all the copyright notices,  
pp. 425–29 constitute an extension of the copyright page.

All rights reserved.

Printed in the United States of America.

Manufacturing by Courier Companies.

Book design by Martin Lubin.

Production manager: Diane O'Connor.

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

The Norton sampler : short essays for composition / [edited by]

Thomas Cooley.—6th ed.

p. cm.

Includes index.

**ISBN 0-393-97882-6 (pbk.)**

**ISBN 0-393-97943-1 (Instructor's Edition)**

1. College readers. 2. English language—Rhetoric. 3. Essays.

I. Cooley, Thomas, 1942– II. Title.

PE1417 .N6 2003

808'.0427—dc21

2002032979

W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 500 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10110

[www.wwnorton.com](http://www.wwnorton.com)

W. W. Norton & Company Ltd., Castle House, 75/76 Wells Street, London W1T 3QT

6 7 8 9 0

# PREFACE

XX

*The Norton Sampler* is a collection of short essays for composition students. Like the cloth samplers in colonial America that schoolchildren did to learn and perfect their stitches (and their ABCs), *The Norton Sampler* is based on the assumption that writing is a practical art that can be learned by studying some basic patterns.

The rhetorical patterns illustrated by the readings in this *Sampler* include description, narrative, example, classification and division, process analysis, comparison and contrast, definition, cause and effect, and argument. Each chapter focuses on one pattern and includes five or so short essays organized primarily around that pattern. Each essay is followed by a battery—not a deadly one, I hope—of study questions and writing prompts.

Most of the model essays in *The Norton Sampler* are only two to four pages long, and even the longest can be easily read in a single setting. The essays are not only short but complete. I have found that even classic works like Alexander Petrunkevitch's essay about the spider and the wasp are routinely reprinted with unacknowledged amputations. It is the rhetoric of the short piece that our students are learning in beginning composition classes, and we cannot confidently ask them to look at beginnings, middles, and endings or the shape of an author's argument if those forms and shapes are actually the work of an editor. Thus I have taken pains to gather complete essays, or, in a few cases (indicated in the headnotes), complete chapters of books or sections of longer articles.

Though the chapters of the *Sampler* can be taken up in any order, I've provided an Introduction that exposes students to the process that experienced writers tend to follow. This chapter also discusses the four basic modes of writing—description, narration, exposition, and argument—along with how they work together (or apart) to suit a writer's various purposes.

Since many teachers like to begin a course by having students write

about their own experiences, the next two chapters of the *Sampler* deal with basic techniques of description and narration, the two modes most essential to personal writing. These are followed by six chapters of exposition, ranging from the simpler techniques of exemplification and classification to the more complex strategies of process analysis, comparison and contrast, definition, and cause and effect. Argumentation and persuasion are addressed in a chapter organized according to the classical divisions of logos, pathos, and ethos (though I have not burdened the student with such terms). A final chapter includes a small collection of classic essays, and there is a Glossary.

Among the many distinctive features of *The Norton Sampler*, those who have used the book before will find much that is familiar, plus a number of features new to the Sixth Edition:

- *Over half the readings are new, most written in the last ten years.* From Sebastian Junger's report of war against the Taliban in Afghanistan to Dave Barry's hilarious essay defining guys (as distinct from men) to an article from *The Onion* reporting on a church bake sale where all seven of the Deadly Sins were committed (repeatedly), the readings in the *Sampler* are selected to interest (and even amuse) today's students. But there are also many classic essays here by writers such as George Orwell, Virginia Woolf, and E. B. White. There are sixty-three essays in all.
- *A new, RealTime writing feature in every chapter shows the modes of writing in everyday, "real world" texts.* Whether descriptive copy from a catalog selling watches or an *Outside* magazine Q&A column explaining what causes old tents to smell like barf, these pieces show students that the techniques and strategies they are being asked to learn are not used just in the writing classroom but in all the writing and thinking that we do. Moreover, these new readings include visual components that make the point that writing in the age of the Internet consists of more than just words.
- *A new Web site offers links to texts written for the Web, showing how the modes of writing play out online.* Each link is introduced by a short headnote with contextual information and is followed by study questions that make the online materials teachable. Go to [wnorton.com/write/sampler](http://wnorton.com/write/sampler).

- A specially commissioned essay by Annie Dillard looks at the process she went through in writing her famous essay about the death of a moth. Paired to serve as an introduction to the book, the two essays are explicated to show how Dillard herself uses the various modes of writing to glorious effect.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are two people above all whom I want to thank for their work and support on this new edition of *The Norton Sampler*: Barbara Cooley, my patient wife and a skilled technical writer and editor, and the indefatigable Marilyn Moller, editor extraordinaire at Norton, who is chiefly responsible for the *Sampler's* new look and content. Then there is Nicole Netherton, editor of editors, along with several other people at Norton: Carol Flechner, who copyedited the book; Diane O'Connor, the production manager; Marian Johnson, the managing editor; Eileen Connell, who took charge of the marketing and the Web components; and Nancy Rodwan, the permissions manager. The lovely new interior design and the fanciful new cover design are thanks to Martin Lubin and Anna George respectively.

Among the teachers across the country who read various parts of the manuscript, I wish especially to thank Fred C. Adams, Pennsylvania State University, Fayette Campus; Julie Armstrong, University of South Florida, St. Petersburg; Marian Arkin, LaGuardia Community College; Dorris Brass, University of Maryland, Baltimore County; Linda Breslin, Texas Tech University; Jessica Brown, City College, San Francisco; Tim Bywater, Dixie State College; Karen Clark, The University of Arkansas; Deanna Evans, Bemidji State University; Michael Fisher, South Georgia College; Janet Halbert, Western Texas College; Tom Hallock, University of Tampa; Scott Hathaway, Hudson Valley Community College; Katherine J. Sanchez, Tomball College; George Q. Xu, Clarion University; and Sandra Young, Sacred Heart University.

For their help on this or earlier versions of the *Sampler*, I want also to express my gratitude to Carol Hollar-Zwick, Julia Reidhead, Hugh O'Neill, Kristin Sheerin, Shelly Perron, Kate Lovelady—all formerly or presently of W. W. Norton & Company.

At Ohio State, there are my friends and colleagues over the years,

including Lee Abbott, William Allen, Richard Altick, Daniel Barnes, Toni Bates, Morris Beja, Ellen Carter, David Citino, Rebecca Cline, Edward P. J. Corbett, Suellyn Duffey, John Gabel, Kim Gainer, Sara Garnes, Andrea Lunsford, Kitty Locker, Richard Martin, Terence Odlin, Frank O'Hare, Faye Purol, Dennis Quon, Barbara Rigney, Michael Rupright, Arnold Shapiro, Frances Shapiro, Amy Shuman, Clifford Vaida, Eric Walborn, Charles Wheeler, and Christian Zacher.

Thomas Cooley  
Columbus, Ohio

# CONTENTS

XX

THEMATIC CONTENTS xvii

PREFACE xxv

INTRODUCTION 3

XX

Annie Dillard ♠ THE DEATH OF A MOTH 4

And that is why I believe those hollow crisps on the bathroom floor are moths. I think I know moths, and fragments of moths, and chips and tatters of utterly empty moths, in any state. How many of you, I asked the people in my class, which of you want to give your lives and be writers?

Annie Dillard ♠ HOW I WROTE THE MOTH ESSAY—  
AND WHY 8

Walking back to my desk, where I had been answering letters, I realized that the burning moth was a dandy visual focus for all my recent thoughts about an empty, dedicated life. Perhaps I'd try to write a short narrative about it.

THE PROCESSES OF WRITING 16

THE MODES OF WRITING 16

MIXING THE MODES 18



## CHAPTER ONE: DESCRIPTION 21

XX

## REALTIME WRITING / CATALOG DESCRIPTION 26

## Alice Steinbach ♣ THE MISS DENNIS SCHOOL OF WRITING 28

Miss Dennis always wore a variation of one outfit—a dark-colored, flared woolen skirt, a tailored white blouse and a cardigan sweater, usually black, thrown over her shoulders and held together by a little pearl chain.

Can you see her? I can. And the image of her makes me smile. Still.

## Cherokee Paul McDonald ♣ A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE 37

"He's mostly silver, but the silver is somehow made up of *all* the colors, if you know what I mean." I stopped. "Do you know what I mean by colors?"

## Beverly Dipo ♣ NO RAINBOWS, NO ROSES 42

At the door to 309, I pause, adjusting my eyes to the darkness. The only light in the room is coming from an infusion pump, which is flashing its red beacon as if in warning, and the dim hall light that barely confirms the room's furnishings and the shapeless form on the bed.

## Ann Hodgman ♣ NO WONDER THEY CALL ME A BITCH 47

As alarming as the Gaines-burgers were, their soy meal began to seem like an old friend when the time came to try some *canned* dog foods.

CHAPTER TWO: NARRATIVE 54

XX

REALTIME WRITING / OBITUARY 58

Thomas Beller ♠ THE ASHEN GUY: LOWER BROADWAY,  
SEPTEMBER 11, 2001 60

At first glance he looked like a snowman, except instead of snow he was covered in gray, asbestos-colored ash. . . . A small plume of dust drifted off the top of his head as he walked, echoing the larger plume of smoke drifting off of One World Trade behind him.

Sebastian Junger ♠ THE LION IN WINTER 65

Dogs were barking in the distance, and a soldier shouted into his radio that the wounded were coming in and they needed more medicine, *now*.

Mary Mebane ♠ THE BACK OF THE BUS 72

Most Americans have never had to live with terror. I had had to live with it all my life—the psychological terror of segregation, in which there was a special set of laws governing your movements. You violated them at your peril. . . .

Richard Rodriguez ♠ NONE OF THIS IS FAIR 81

Affirmative Action programs had made it all possible. The disadvantages of others permitted my promotion; the absence of many Mexican-Americans from academic life allowed my designation as a “minority student.”

Kelly Simon ♠ FRANK SINATRA’S GUM 88

He leaned his elbows on the table. His face was inches from mine. His baby blues twinkled at me. I could smell the Juicy Fruit on his breath.

## CHAPTER THREE: EXAMPLE 93

XX

## REALTIME WRITING / GIRL SCOUT COOKIE BOX 99

*The Onion* ♣ ALL SEVEN DEADLY SINS COMMITTED AT  
CHURCH BAKE SALE 101

In total, 347 individual acts of sin were committed at the bake sale, with nearly every attendee committing at least one of the seven deadly sins as outlined by Gregory the Great in the Fifth Century.

Malcolm Browne ♣ THE INVISIBLE FLYING CAT 106

The reasoning techniques of thought experiments are not necessarily difficult. To test the statement that the world is infested by invisible flying cats which invariably avoid human beings, we would consider the consequences of such a situation.

Richard Lederer ♣ ENGLISH IS A CRAZY LANGUAGE 110

Sometimes you have to believe that all English speakers should be committed to an asylum for the verbally insane. In what other language do people drive in a parkway and park in a driveway? . . . In what other language can your nose run and your feet smell?

Nat Hentoff ♣ JAZZ: MUSIC BEYOND TIME AND  
NATIONS 116

I was eleven when I first heard jazz. Walking down a street in Boston, I was stopped by the sound coming out of a public address system attached to a record store. I was so exhilarated that I yelled in delight—something I had never done before on the proper streets of Boston. The music was Artie Shaw's "Nightmare."

Janet Wu ♣ HOMEWARD BOUND 123

My grandmother has bound feet. Cruelly tethered since her birth, they are like bonsai trees, miniature versions of what should have been.

CHAPTER FOUR: CLASSIFICATION AND DIVISION 127

XX

REALTIME WRITING / WWW.DAILYCANDY.COM 130

Amy Tan ♣ MOTHER TONGUE 132

I spend a great deal of my time thinking about the power of language—the way it can evoke an emotion, a visual image, a complex idea, or a simple truth. Language is the tool of my trade. And I use them all—all the Englishes I grew up with.

Eric A. Watts ♣ THE COLOR OF SUCCESS 140

“Hitting the books,” expressing oneself articulately, and, at times, displaying more than a modest amount of intelligence—these traits were derided as “acting white.”

Isaac Asimov ♣ WHAT DO YOU CALL A PLATYPUS? 146

All the mammals are divided into two subclasses. In one of these subclasses (“Protheria” or “first-beasts”) are the duckbill and five species of the spiny anteater. In the other (“Theria” or just “beasts”) are all the other 4,231 known living species of mammals.

Freeman J. Dyson ♣ SCIENCE, GUIDED BY ETHICS, CAN LIFT UP THE POOR 154

We all know that green technology has a dark side, just as gray technology has a dark side. Gray technology brought us hydrogen bombs as well as telephones. Green technology brought us anthrax bombs as well as antibiotics.

Jeff Jacoby ♣ THE RISE OF THE BLENDED AMERICAN 159

The population of blended citizens is soaring, and with it the realization that racial divisions are only skin deep. Tens of millions of Americans have learned to think outside the racial box. It’s time the government followed suit.

## CHAPTER FIVE: PROCESS ANALYSIS 163

XX

### REALTIME WRITING / HOW TO MAKE RAZZLEBERRY LEMONADE 168

Joshua Piven and David Borgenicht ♣ HOW TO FEND OFF A SHARK 170

Contrary to popular opinion, the shark's nose is not the area to attack, unless you cannot reach the eyes or gills.

Jon Katz ♣ HOW BOYS BECOME MEN 174

No. A chicken would probably have had the sense to get out of the way. This boy was already well on the road to becoming a *man*, having learned one of the central ethics of his gender: Experience pain rather than show fear.

Alexander Petrunkevitch ♣ THE SPIDER AND THE WASP 179

Meanwhile, the wasp, having satisfied itself that the victim is of the right species, moves off a few inches to dig the spider's grave. . . . Now and again the wasp pops out of the hole to make sure that the spider is still there.

Garrison Keillor ♣ HOW TO WRITE A LETTER 187

Don't worry about form. It's not a term paper. When you come to the end of one episode, just start a new paragraph. You can go from a few lines about the sad state of pro football to the fight with your mother to your fond memories of Mexico to your cat's urinary-tract infection to a few thoughts on a personal indebtedness and on to the kitchen sink and what's in it.

Philip Weiss ♣ HOW TO GET OUT OF A LOCKED TRUNK 192

Every culture comes up with tests of a person's ability to get out of a sticky situation. . . . When they slam the [car] trunk, though, you're helpless unless someone finds you. You would think that such a common worry should have a ready fix, and that the secret of getting out of a locked trunk is something we should all know about.

## CHAPTER SIX: COMPARISON AND CONTRAST 200

XX

### REALTIME WRITING / BASEBALL STATS 204

#### Deborah Dalfonso ♣ GRAMMY REWARDS 206

Our daughter, Jill, has two grandmothers who are as different as chalk and cheese. One grandmother taught her how to count cards and make her face as blank as a huge, white Kleenex when she bluffed at blackjack. . . . The other grandmother taught her where to place the salad forks.

#### Debi Davis ♣ BODY IMPERFECT 209

Children, in contrast, found my appearance clearly fascinating. One small girl came up to me and stared with unabashed curiosity at my empty pantlegs.

#### Bruce Catton ♣ GRANT AND LEE: A STUDY IN CONTRASTS 212

No part of either man's life became him more than the part he played in this brief meeting in the McLean house at Appomattox. Their behavior there put all succeeding generations of Americans in their debt. Two great Americans, Grant and Lee—very different, yet under everything very much alike.

#### Gary Soto ♣ LIKE MEXICANS 218

But the woman I married was not Mexican but Japanese. It was a surprise to me. For years, I went about wide-eyed in my search for the brown girl in a white dress at a dance.

#### Deborah Tannen ♣ GENDER IN THE CLASSROOM 224

Male students are more likely to be comfortable attacking the readings and might find the inclusion of personal anecdotes irrelevant and "soft." Women are more likely to resist discussion they perceive as hostile, and, indeed, it is women in my classes who are most likely to offer personal anecdotes.

#### David Sedaris ♣ REMEMBERING MY CHILDHOOD ON THE CONTINENT OF AFRICA 233

Certain events are parallel, but compared with Hugh's, my childhood was unspeakably dull. When I was seven years old, my family moved to North Carolina. When he was seven years old, Hugh's family moved to the Congo. We had a collie and a house cat. They had a monkey and two horses named Charlie Brown and Satan.

CHAPTER SEVEN: DEFINITION 241

XX

REALTIME WRITING / WWW.SAVETHEMANATEE.ORG 244

Dave Barry ♣ GUYS VS. MEN 246

And what, exactly, do I mean by “guys”? I don’t know. I haven’t thought that much about it. One of the major characteristics of guyhood is that we guys don’t spend a lot of time pondering our deep innermost feelings. There is a serious question in my mind about whether guys actually *have* deep innermost feelings unless you count, for example, loyalty to the Detroit Tigers. . . .

Pico Iyer ♣ IN PRAISE OF THE HUMBLE COMMA 254

Punctuation marks are the road signs placed along the highway of our communication—to control speeds, provide directions and prevent head-on collisions. A period has the unblinking finality of a red light; the comma is a flashing yellow light that asks us only to slow down; and the semicolon is a stop sign. . . .

John Archibald Wheeler ♣ HOW COME THE QUANTUM? 260

Einstein, after listening patiently, said, as he had on other occasions, “I still cannot believe God plays dice.” Then he added, “But maybe I have earned the right to make my mistakes.”

Langston Hughes ♣ BOP 265

“You must not know where Bop comes from,” said Simple, astonished at my ignorance.

“I do not know,” I said. “Where?”

“From the police,” said Simple.

Geeta Kothari ♣ IF YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT, THEN WHAT AM I? 269

I want to eat what the kids at school eat: bologna, hot dogs, salami—foods my parents find repugnant because they contain pork and meat byproducts, crushed bone and hair glued together by chemicals and fat. . . . Indians, of course, do not eat such things.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CAUSE AND EFFECT 276

XX

REALTIME WRITING / OUTSIDE MAGAZINE Q&A 282

Marissa Nuñez ♣ CLIMBING THE GOLDEN ARCHES 284

Working at McDonald's has taught me a lot. . . . I'd like to have my own business someday, and working at McDonald's is what showed me I could do that.

John Edwards ♣ PRISON MAN CONSIDERS TURKEY 290

I got up, leaving my decent federal Thanksgiving dinner to the vultures. Up in the visiting room, families were arriving. Some inmates would let their families wait while they ate, but for most of us, family came first, even if that meant missing a special meal.

Jared Diamond ♣ WHO KILLED EASTER ISLAND? 295

They . . . turned to the largest remaining meat source available: humans, whose bones become common in late Easter Island garbage heaps.

Henry Louis Gates Jr. ♣ A GIANT STEP 303

"Pauline," he said to my mother, his voice kindly but amused, "there's not a thing wrong with that child. The problem's psychosomatic. Your son's an overachiever."

Ruth Russell ♣ THE WOUNDS THAT CAN'T BE STITCHED UP 309

Delirious, she cried out for her children and apologized for an accident she neither caused nor could have avoided. An accident that happened when her car was hit head-on by a drunk driver speeding down the wrong side of the road in a half-ton truck with no headlights.



CHAPTER NINE: ARGUMENT 314

XX

REAL TIME WRITING / SIGN ON AN OLD HOUSE 320

Thomas Jefferson ♣ THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE 322

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

Johnson C. Montgomery ♣ THE ISLAND OF PLENTY 328

The United States should remain an island of plenty in a sea of hunger. The future of mankind is at stake. We are not responsible for the rest of humanity.

Kori Quintana ♣ THE PRICE OF POWER: LIVING IN THE NUCLEAR AGE 334

During my research on the effects of radiation on human genes, I noticed that there were several references to studies of Mormons in Utah. My curiosity piqued, I studied on. Apparently, the atmospheric bomb tests of the 1950s over Nevada were performed only when winds were blowing away from Las Vegas toward Utah.

Roger Verhulst ♣ BEING PREPARED IN SUBURBIA 340

I've felt the gun in my hand punch psychic holes in my intellectual convictions. And having felt all that, I do not have much hope that private ownership of deadly weapons will be at all regulated or controlled in the foreseeable future.

Meghan Daum ♣ SAFE-SEX LIES 345

AIDS awareness has become so much a part of the pop culture that not only is it barely noticeable, it is largely ineffectual. MTV runs programs about safe sex that are barely distinguishable from documentaries about Madonna.

Chief Seattle ♣ REPLY TO THE U.S. GOVERNMENT 352

Let him be just and deal kindly with my people, for the dead are not powerless. Dead, did I say? There is no death, only a change of worlds.