

75  
READINGS:  
AN  
ANTHOLOGY

Third Edition

# 75 READINGS: AN ANTHOLOGY

Third Edition

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**In special appreciation  
Santi Buscemi  
Middlesex County College**

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## **75 READINGS: AN ANTHOLOGY**

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# PREFACE

*75 Readings: An Anthology* is designed to introduce students to a broad variety of both traditional and contemporary essays, as well as topical pieces by international, ethnic, and women writers. The anthology has been compiled by an editor-composition instructor team whose purpose has been to provide a wide range of supplementary essays at a low price to the students. The primary aim has been to expose students to a variety of rhetorical purposes, writing styles, and subject matter, while retaining maximum pedagogical flexibility for the instructor. While the essays are organized by rhetorical mode, they can be used in other configurations as well; a thematic table of contents suggests other ways for clustering the essays.

The third edition features twelve new readings. Most of these address some current issue, so that the anthology now has essays on abortion, the greenhouse effect, nuclear war, and racial and gender issues. There is also an essay based on documented research which, in addition to addressing racial and gender issues, can provide a model for researched papers.

A comprehensive instructor's manual, prepared by Professors Santi Buscemi of Middlesex County College and Charlotte Smith of New York University, provides brief author biogra-

phies, discussion questions, and journal and paper assignments for each essay in the anthology.

Special thanks are due to those instructors who reviewed the anthology and gave us their suggestions for the third edition: Paula Gibson, Cardinal Stritch College; Eric Hibbison, J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College; Dale Ross, Iowa State University; and Deborah Spencer, Cabrillo College.

In addition, the following people at McGraw-Hill helped to bring this project to fruition: Lesley Denton, James R. Belser, and Richard Ausburn.

# CONTENTS

THEMATIC CONTENTS ix

PREFACE xv

## CHAPTER 1

### Narration

---

George Orwell: <i>A Hanging</i>	1
Langston Hughes: <i>Salvation</i>	6
Maya Angelou: <i>Grandmother's Victory</i>	9
Akira Kurosawa: <i>Crybaby</i>	14
William Zinsser: <i>The Transaction</i>	23
Luz Alicia Herrera: <i>Testimonies of Guatemalan Women</i>	26
Richard Selzer: <i>The Discus Thrower</i>	37
Olive Schreiner: <i>Somewhere, Some Time, Some Place</i>	40

## CHAPTER 2

### Description

---

Margaret Laurence: <i>Where the World Began</i>	46
Joan Didion: <i>The Metropolitan Cathedral in San Salvador</i>	52
William Least Heat Moon: <i>Tuesday Morning</i>	54
Peter Schjeldahl: <i>Cyclone! Rising to the Fall</i>	59
Mordecai Richler: <i>Main Street</i>	64
Virginia Woolf: <i>The Death of the Moth</i>	73
Peter Freundlich: <i>The Crime of the Tooth: Dentistry in the Chair</i>	76
Doris Lessing: <i>My Father</i>	84

### CHAPTER 3

#### Process

---

- Benjamin Franklin: *Attaining Moral Virtue* 93  
 Alexander Petrunkevitch: *The Spider and the Wasp* 97  
 Rachel Carson: *The Grey Beginnings* 102  
 Euell Gibbons: *How to Cook a Carp* 112  
 Jessica Mitford: *Behind the Formaldehyde Curtain* 115  
 Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley: *Introduction to  
 Frankenstein* 125  
 Richard Howey: *How to Write a Rotten Poem with Almost  
 No Effort* 130

### CHAPTER 4

#### Definition

---

- Bruno Bettelheim: *The Holocaust* 133  
 Susan Sontag: *Beauty* 136  
 Joseph Epstein: *The Virtues of Ambition* 139  
 Barbara Grizzuti Harrison: *Moral Ambiguity* 145  
 Jo Goodwin Parker: *What Is Poverty?* 150  
 Tom Wolfe: *Pornoviolence* 154  
 Dorothy Parker: *Good Souls* 161

### CHAPTER 5

#### Division and Classification

---

- William Golding: *Thinking as a Hobby* 167  
 Erika Ritter: *Bicycles* 175  
 American Friends Service Committee: *Struggle for Justice* 178  
 James David Barber: *Presidential Character and How to  
 Foresee It* 197  
 David M. Ludlum: *The Climythology of America* 203  
 Robert Brustein: *Reflections on Horror Movies* 211  
 Susan Allen Toth: *Cinematypes* 221

## CHAPTER 6

### Comparison and Contrast

---

Bruce Catton: <i>Grant and Lee: A Study in Contrasts</i>	225
Cynthia Ozick: <i>On Permission to Write</i>	229
Murray Ross: <i>Football Red and Baseball Green</i>	235
Mark Twain: <i>Two Views of the Mississippi</i>	244
May Sarton: <i>The Rewards of Living a Solitary Life</i>	246
Marie Winn: <i>Viewing vs. Reading</i>	247
Ralph Waldo Emerson: <i>Conservatives and Liberals</i>	255

## CHAPTER 7

### Example and Illustration

---

Ann Hodgman: <i>Backwater Cuisine</i>	259
William F. Buckley, Jr.: <i>Why Don't We Complain?</i>	262
Richard Rodriguez: <i>Does America Still Exist?</i>	268
Joyce Maynard: <i>I Remember...</i>	273
Robertson Davies: <i>A Few Kind Words for Superstition</i>	277
Stephen Jay Gould: <i>Were Dinosaurs Dumb?</i>	279
Peter Farb and George Armelagos: <i>The Patterns of Eating</i>	285

## CHAPTER 8

### Cause and Effect

---

Marya Mannes: <i>How Do You Know It's Good?</i>	291
Isaac Asimov: <i>The Villain in the Atmosphere</i>	298
Norman Cousins: <i>Pain Is Not the Ultimate Enemy</i>	303
E. M. Forster: <i>My Wood</i>	307
Ellen Goodman: <i>Watching the Grasshopper Get the Goodies</i>	310
Jonathan Schell: <i>Nuclear Holocaust</i>	312
Lewis Thomas: <i>The Iks</i>	328
Nadine Gordimer: <i>Art and the State in South Africa</i>	331



## CHAPTER 9

## Analogy

---

Plato: <i>The Myth of the Cave</i>	338
Horace Miner: <i>Body Ritual among the Nacirema</i>	343
Annie Dillard: <i>Transfiguration</i>	349
James C. Rettie: <i>"But a Watch in the Night": A Scientific Fable</i>	352
Loren Eiseley: <i>The Cosmic Prison</i>	358
Barry Lopez: <i>My Horse</i>	361
Farley Mowat: <i>The Perfect House</i>	368
Albert Camus: <i>The Myth of Sisyphus</i>	373

## CHAPTER 10

## Argument

---

Jonathan Swift: <i>A Modest Proposal</i>	377
Lindsay Van Gelder: <i>The Great Person-Hole Cover Debate: A Modest Proposal for Anyone Who Thinks the Word "He" Is Just Plain Easier . . .</i>	385
Arthur E. Lean: <i>The Farce Called "Grading"</i>	388
H. L. Mencken: <i>The Penalty of Death</i>	394
Thomas Jefferson: <i>The Declaration of Independence</i>	397
Martin Luther King, Jr.: <i>I Have a Dream</i>	401
Alan Paton: <i>Eight Signposts to Salvation</i>	406
Walter Murdoch: <i>On Rabbits, Morality, Etc.</i>	409

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	415
-----------------	-----

# THEMATIC CONTENTS

## Perspectives on Existence

---

Albert Camus: <i>The Myths of Sisyphus</i>	373
Rachel Carson: <i>The Grey Beginnings</i>	102
Loren Eiseley: <i>The Cosmic Prison</i>	358
Stephen Jay Gould: <i>Were Dinosaurs Dumb?</i>	279
Luz Alicia Herrera: <i>Testimonies of Guatemalan Women</i>	26
Plato: <i>The Myth of the Cave</i>	338
James C. Rettie: <i>"But a Watch in the Night": A Scientific Fable</i>	352
May Sarton: <i>The Rewards of Living a Solitary Life</i>	246
Olive Schreiner: <i>Somewhere, Some Time, Some Place</i>	40
Virginia Woolf: <i>The Death of the Moth</i>	73

## Growing Up, Growing Old

---

Maya Angelou: <i>Grandmother's Victory</i>	9
Norman Cousins: <i>Pain Is Not the Ultimate Enemy</i>	303
Benjamin Franklin: <i>Attaining Moral Virtue</i>	93
William Golding: <i>Thinking as a Hobby</i>	167
Langston Hughes: <i>Salvation</i>	6
Akira Kurosawa: <i>Crybaby</i>	14
Doris Lessing: <i>My Father</i>	84
Richard Selzer: <i>The Discus Thrower</i>	37

### Life in America

---

William F. Buckley, Jr.: <i>Why Don't We Complain?</i>	262
Euell Gibbons: <i>How to Cook a Carp</i>	112
Ellen Goodman: <i>Watching the Grasshopper Get the Goodies</i>	310
William Least Heat Moon: <i>Tuesday Morning</i>	54
Ann Hodgman: <i>Backwater Cuisine</i>	259
Barry Lopez: <i>My Horse</i>	361
Jessica Mitford: <i>Behind the Formaldehyde Curtain</i>	115
Jo Goodwin Parker: <i>What Is Poverty?</i>	150
Peter Schjeldahl: <i>Cyclone! Rising to the Fall</i>	59
Mark Twain: <i>Two Views of the Mississippi</i>	244

### Canadian Voices

---

Robertson Davies: <i>A Few Kind Words for Superstition</i>	277
Margaret Laurence: <i>Where the World Began</i>	46
Farley Mowat: <i>The Perfect House</i>	368
Mordecai Richler: <i>Main Street</i>	64
Erika Ritter: <i>Bicycles</i>	175

### Power and Politics

---

American Friends Service Committee: <i>Struggle for Justice</i>	178
James David Barber: <i>Presidential Character and How to Foresee It</i>	197
Bruce Catton: <i>Grant and Lee: A Study in Contrasts</i>	225
Joan Didion: <i>The Metropolitan Cathedral in San Salvador</i>	52
Ralph Waldo Emerson: <i>Conservatives and Liberals</i>	255
Nadine Gordimer: <i>Art and the State in South Africa</i>	331
Barbara Grizzuti Harrison: <i>Moral Ambiguity</i>	145
Luz Alicia Herrera: <i>Testimonies of Guatemalan Women</i>	26
Thomas Jefferson: <i>The Declaration of Independence</i>	397
Martin Luther King, Jr.: <i>I Have a Dream</i>	401
Alan Paton: <i>Eight Signposts to Salvation</i>	406
Richard Rodriguez: <i>Does America Still Exist?</i>	268

Olive Schreiner: <i>Somewhere, Some Time, Some Place</i>	40
Lewis Thomas: <i>The Iks</i>	328

### Problems, Solutions, and Consequences

---

Isaac Asimov: <i>The Villain in the Atmosphere</i>	298
Euell Gibbons: <i>How to Cook a Carp</i>	112
Barbara Grizzuti Harrison: <i>Moral Ambiguity</i>	145
Arthur E. Lean: <i>The Farce Called "Grading"</i>	388
H. L. Mencken: <i>The Penalty of Death</i>	394
Farley Mowat: <i>The Perfect House</i>	368
Walter Murdoch: <i>On Rabbits, Morality, Etc.</i>	409
Jonathan Schell: <i>Nuclear Holocaust</i>	312
Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley: <i>Introduction to Frankenstein</i>	125
Jonathan Swift: <i>A Modest Proposal</i>	377
Lewis Thomas: <i>The Iks</i>	328

### Territory and Competition

---

Joseph Epstein: <i>The Virtues of Ambition</i>	139
E. M. Forster: <i>My Wood</i>	307
Ann Hodgman: <i>Backwater Cuisine</i>	259
Arthur E. Lean: <i>The Farce Called "Grading"</i>	388
Alexander Petrunkevitch: <i>The Spider and the Wasp</i>	97
Murray Ross: <i>Football Red and Baseball Green</i>	235

### Cultural Rules of Form and Behavior

---

Peter Farb and George Armelagos: <i>The Patterns of Eating</i>	285
Benjamin Franklin: <i>Attaining Moral Virtue</i>	93
Ellen Goodman: <i>Watching the Grasshopper Get the Goodies</i>	310
Nadine Gordimer: <i>Art and the State in South Africa</i>	331
Akira Kurosawa: <i>Crybaby</i>	14
Marya Mannes: <i>How Do You Know It's Good?</i>	291
Horace Miner: <i>Body Ritual among the Nacirema</i>	343

George Orwell: <i>A Hanging</i>	1
Dorothy Parker: <i>Good Souls</i>	161
Lewis Thomas: <i>The Ills</i>	328

### **The Evolution of Science and Technology**

---

Isaac Asimov: <i>The Villain in the Atmosphere</i>	298
Peter Freundlich: <i>The Crime of the Tooth: Dentistry in the Chair</i>	76
David M. Ludlum: <i>Climythyology</i>	203
Jessica Mitford: <i>Behind the Formaldehyde Curtain</i>	115
James C. Rettie: "But a Watch in the Night": <i>A Scientific Fable</i>	352
Jonathan Schell: <i>Nuclear Holocaust</i>	312
Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley: <i>Introduction to Frankenstein</i>	125
Marie Winn: <i>Viewing vs. Reading</i>	247

### **Fear and Exhilaration**

---

Robert Brustein: <i>Reflections on Horror Movies</i>	211
Norman Cousins: <i>Pain Is Not the Ultimate Enemy</i>	303
Robertson Davies: <i>A Few Kind Words for Superstition</i>	277
Peter Freundlich: <i>The Crime of the Tooth: Dentistry in the Chair</i>	76
Peter Schjeldahl: <i>Cyclone! Rising to the Fall</i>	59
Richard Selzer: <i>The Discus Thrower</i>	37
Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley: <i>Introduction to Frankenstein</i>	125

### **On Media**

---

Robert Brustein: <i>Reflections on Horror Movies</i>	211
Barbara Grizzuti Harrison: <i>Moral Ambiguity</i>	145
Joyce Maynard: <i>I Remember...</i>	273
Susan Allen Toth: <i>Cinematypes</i>	221

- Marie Winn: *Viewing vs. Reading* 247  
Tom Wolfe: *Pornoviolence* 154

### On Language and the Writing Process

---

- Bruno Bettelheim: *The Holocaust* 133  
Annie Dillard: *Transfiguration* 349  
Richard Howey: *How to Write a Rotten Poem with Almost No Effort* 130  
Marya Mannes: *How Do You Know It's Good?* 291  
Cynthia Ozick: *On Permission to Write* 229  
Susan Sontag: *Beauty* 136  
Lindsay Van Gelder: *The Great Person-Hole Cover Debate: A Modest Proposal for Anyone Who Thinks the Word "He" Is Just Plain Easier...* 385  
William Zinsser: *The Transaction* 23

# 1

## Narration

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### A Hanging

George Orwell

It was in Burma, a sodden morning of the rains. A sickly light, like yellow tinfoil, was slanting over the high walls into the jail yard. We were waiting outside the condemned cells, a row of sheds fronted with double bars, like small animal cages. Each cell measured about ten feet by ten and was quite bare within except for a plank bed and a pot of drinking water. In some of them brown silent men were squatting at the inner bars, with their blankets draped round them. These were the condemned men, due to be hanged within the next week or two.

One prisoner had been brought out of his cell. He was a Hindu, a puny wisp of a man, with a shaven head and vague liquid eyes. He had a thick, sprouting moustache, absurdly too big for his body, rather like the moustache of a comic man in the films. Six tall Indian warders were guarding him and getting him ready for the gallows. Two of them stood by with rifles and fixed bayonets, while the others handcuffed him, passed a chain through his handcuffs and fixed it to their belts, and lashed his arms tight to his sides. They crowded very close about him, with their hands always on him in a careful, caressing grip, as though all the while feeling him to make sure he was there. It was like

men handling a fish which is still alive and may jump back into the water. But he stood quite unresisting, yielding his arms limply to the ropes, as though he hardly noticed what was happening.

Eight o'clock struck and a bugle call, desolately thin in the wet air, floated from the distant barracks. The superintendent of the jail, who was standing apart from the rest of us, moodily prodding the gravel with his stick, raised his head at the sound. He was an army doctor, with a grey toothbrush moustache and a gruff voice. "For God's sake hurry up, Francis," he said irritably. "The man ought to have been dead by this time. Aren't you ready yet?"

Francis, the head jailer, a fat Dravidian in a white drill suit and gold spectacles, waved his black hand. "Yes sir, yes sir," he bubbled. "All iss satisfactorily prepared. The hangman iss waiting. We shall proceed."

"Well, quick march, then. The prisoners can't get their breakfast till this job's over."

We set out for the gallows. Two warders marched on either side of the prisoner, with their rifles at the slope; two others marched close against him, gripping him by arm and shoulder, as though at once pushing and supporting him. The rest of us, magistrates and the like, followed behind. Suddenly, when we had gone ten yards, the procession stopped short without any order or warning. A dreadful thing had happened—a dog, come goodness knows whence, had appeared in the yard. It came bounding among us with a loud volley of barks, and leapt round us wagging its whole body, wild with glee at finding so many human beings together. It was a large woolly dog, half Airedale, half pariah. For a moment it pranced round us, and then, before anyone could stop it, it had made a dash for the prisoner, and jumping up tried to lick his face. Everyone stood aghast, too taken aback even to grab at the dog.

"Who let that bloody brute in here?" said the superintendent angrily. "Catch it, someone!"

A warder, detached from the escort, charged clumsily after the dog, but it danced and gambolled just out of his reach, taking everything as part of the game. A young Eurasian jailer picked



up a handful of gravel and tried to stone the dog away, but it dodged the stones and came after us again. Its yaps echoed from the jail walls. The prisoner, in the grasp of the two warders, looked on incuriously, as though this was another formality of the hanging. It was several minutes before someone managed to catch the dog. Then we put my handkerchief through its collar and moved off once more, with the dog still straining and whimpering.

It was about forty yards to the gallows. I watched the bare 9  
brown back of the prisoner marching in front of me. He walked clumsily with his bound arms, but quite steadily, with that bobbing gait of the Indian who never straightens his knees. At each step his muscles slid neatly into place, the lock of hair on his scalp danced up and down, his feet printed themselves on the wet gravel. And once, in spite of the men who gripped him by each shoulder, he stepped slightly aside to avoid a puddle on the path.

It is curious, but till that moment I had never realised what 10  
it means to destroy a healthy, conscious man. When I saw the prisoner step aside to avoid the puddle, I saw the mystery, the unspeakable wrongness, of cutting a life short when it is in full tide. This man was not dying, he was alive just as we were alive. All the organs of his body were working—bowels digesting food, skin renewing itself, nails growing, tissues forming—all toiling away in solemn foolery. His nails would still be growing when he stood on the drop, when he was falling through the air with a tenth of a second to live. His eyes saw the yellow gravel and the grey walls, and his brain still remembered, foresaw, reasoned—reasoned even about puddles. He and we were a party of men walking together, seeing, hearing, feeling, understanding the same world; and in two minutes, with a sudden snap, one of us would be gone—one mind less, one world less.

The gallows stood in a small yard, separate from the main 11  
grounds of the prison, and overgrown with tall prickly weeds. It was a brick erection like three sides of a shed, with planking on top, and above that two beams and a crossbar with the rope dangling. The hangman, a grey-haired convict in the white uniform of the prison, was waiting beside his machine. He greeted us with