

# Read, Reason, Write

F O U R T H E D I T I O N



DOROTHY U. SEYLER

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*Read,  
Reason,  
Write*

DOROTHY U. SEYLER

Northern Virginia Community College

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## *Read, Reason, Write*

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# About the Author

**Dorothy U. Seyler** is Professor of English at Northern Virginia Community College. A Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the College of William and Mary, Dr. Seyler holds advanced degrees from Columbia University and the State University of New York at Albany. She taught at Ohio State University, the University of Kentucky, and Nassau Community College before moving with her family to Northern Virginia.

She has coauthored *Introduction to Literature* and *Language Power*, both now in second editions, and is the author of *The Writer's Stance*, *Patterns of Reflection*, also in its second edition, *Doing Research*, and *Understanding Argument*. In addition, Professor Seyler has published articles in professional journals and popular magazines. She enjoys tennis and traveling and writing about both.

# Preface

I wrote in the Preface to the second and third editions of *Read, Reason, Write* that being asked to prepare a new edition is much like being asked back to a friend's house: although you count on it, you are still delighted when the invitation comes. Well, the third edition maintained old friendships and established many new ones as well, and I am delighted to acknowledge these many friends who make this fourth edition possible.

Although some important new material has been added, the essential character of *Read, Reason, Write* remains the same. The text still combines instruction in critical reading and analysis, argument, and research techniques with a collection of readings appropriate for practicing these skills. The purpose of *Read, Reason, Write* remains to help students develop into better writers of the kinds of papers they are most often required to write, in both college and the world of work: summaries, analyses, reports, documented papers. To achieve its purpose, this text should do more than provide instruction and opportunities for practice in several skills; this text needs to demonstrate to student writers that these seemingly disparate skills interconnect in important ways. *Read, Reason, Write* remains a new kind of text because it shows students the interrelatedness of reading, analytic, argumentative, and research skills.

Except for some assignments in a writing course that ask students to draw on personal experiences exclusively to develop essays, college writing, across the curriculum, requires either summaries, analyses, or evaluations of written pieces, or the use, and synthesis, of one or more sources, or some combination of these purposes. All of these writing assignments test a student's critical reading and thinking skills. Section I of this text begins by emphasizing the importance of good reading skills for effective writing. The section then provides instruction in reading for understanding, in summary techniques, in analyzing elements of style, in understanding context, and in preparing the book review.

Section II, "The World of Argument," starts with the concept of context: arguments are written to an audience, and they generate counterarguments. This section offers strategies for anticipating and coping with opposing views, focuses on recognizing various types of arguments, and bridges the gap between logical structures and the arguments we actually write.

The research process, presented in Section III, is taught as a complex intellectual and writing activity that requires bringing together the skills previously developed: critical reading, analysis, and sound argument.

Instruction throughout the text is supported by exercises and writing assignments and by the readings both in the chapters and in Section IV, a collection that will help students understand both our language and our times.

A more detailed study of each of the text's sections reveals what is new in this fourth edition. The first section contains the fewest changes, as a response to reviewers who urged that "if it ain't broke, don't fix it." Although the literary works within Chapter 3 have not been changed, there are new pieces of literature in Section IV that provide new topics for literary analyses. Section II, "The World of Argument," has been rearranged into two chapters, "The Shape of Argument" and "Preparing Good Arguments." Although the patterns of induction, deduction, analogy, and argument about cause have been retained as a way of understanding the shapes arguments take, the initial presentation of argument is based on the broader Toulmin model, a structure that gives emphasis to recognizing each argument's underlying assumptions. A somewhat shortened discussion of logical fallacies has been moved into this chapter. In "Preparing Good Arguments," the discussion of audience and purpose has been expanded and then guidelines are provided for preparing five types of arguments: the investigative argument, the position paper, the definition argument, the problem-solution paper, and the refutation. Each type is illustrated with either a student or a professional essay. The major revision of Section II highlights the practical, "this is how to do it," focus of *Read, Reason, Write*.

In the third edition, Section III, the research section, was streamlined, on the advice of users, to eliminate the confusion that can be created by providing students with several documentation patterns. The advice was good, but the changes in this section in the new fourth edition should be even better. The MLA pattern of documentation is the only one illustrated in Chapters 6–9, the chapters in which the entire process of research is explained and illustrated. Two sample research papers, one literary, both in MLA style, complete Chapter 9. Then, a new Chapter 10 has been added that explains, in some detail, the author/year style, footnote or endnote style, and the number style. One of the student research essays from Chapter 9 has been altered to illustrate a paper in APA style with running heads, subheadings, and APA documentation. These revisions and additions provide instructors, who want to give students a choice of documentation styles, with guidelines and models sufficient to produce good student papers.

Finally, Section IV has been updated with new articles that illustrate various stylistic strategies, that examine characteristics of television, and that develop arguments on such issues as censorship, euthanasia, affirmative action, gay rights, multiculturalism, urban problems, and the prospects for a global nation. The authors of these works are as diverse as their subjects.

Our times demand that we understand what we read, that we think critically about others' ideas and argue effectively in support of our own, and that we be able systematically to sort through the wealth of available information and ideas, rejecting what is unreliable and synthesizing the useful with what we already know and understand. As we move to complete the twentieth century, we live increasingly in an information society, a society in which people make their living by collecting, sorting, transmitting, and reacting to a constant flow of words and numbers. In this information society, those who learn to read, reason, and write

effectively will be successful in their work; those who enjoy exercising these skills will be happy in that work.

No book of value is written alone. I am pleased to acknowledge the contributions of others in shaping this text. My thanks are due once again to the library staff at the Annandale Campus of Northern Virginia Community College, especially Marion Delmore, Janice Jeffries, and Ruth Stanton, who cheerfully helped me locate needed information and keep me abreast of the latest technology. Working with these generous women continues to be among the most pleasurable moments in preparing my texts. I remain always in debt to my colleague Dick Wilan, who is the best sounding board a writer could ever hope to have, and I want to acknowledge the fine work of McGraw's best editing supervisor, Tom Holton. I would also like to thank students Alan Peterson, Clark Martin, Karen Paulik, Patti Bailey, and Tom Finley whose essays grace this text; they should be proud of the effort they put into their writing. I appreciate as well the good suggestions of the following reviewers of the third edition: Mary Ann Dazey, Mississippi State University, and Robert Esch, University of Texas at El Paso.

My editor Steve Pensinger continues to have good advice for each new edition and to steer me through the process of making a book. *Read, Reason, Write* was the first text that Steve signed after he became an editor at Random House; this fourth edition was the last contract he signed as an independent publisher attached to McGraw-Hill. Although I am sure that this text will survive without Steve, I am equally sure that I, and all the other writers Steve has worked with, will miss his good sense and good humor.

To keep the friends of *Read, Reason, Write* up to date with the Seyler family, I want to conclude once more with a dedication of this book to my daughter Ruth—a high school student for the first edition, a college student for the second, a graduate student for the third, and now busy with her own career—but still with time to help me select new essays for the anthology. It remains to be my hope that she, and all my students, will understand that it is the liberal education that makes continued growth of the human spirit both possible and pleasurable.

**Dorothy U. Seyler**

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# SECTION I

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