

An Introduction to **Critical Reading**

Fourth Edition



Thomas Barnwell  
Leah McCraney



# *An Introduction to Critical Reading*

FOURTH EDITION

THOMAS BARNWELL  
LEAH McCRANEY

*University of Alabama at Birmingham*

**Harcourt College Publishers**

Fort Worth Philadelphia San Diego New York Orlando Austin San Antonio  
Toronto Montreal London Sydney Tokyo

**Publisher** Earl McPeck  
**Acquisitions Editor** Stephen Dalphin  
**Market Strategist** Laura Brennan  
**Project Editor** Louise Slominsky  
**Art Director** Garry Harman  
**Production Manager** James McDonald

Cover image: *Windy Day in Vienna* by Maurice de Vlaminck. Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow, Russia.

ISBN: 0-15-507345-1

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 99-64300

Copyright © 2000, 1997, 1994, 1990 by Harcourt, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Requests for permission to make copies of any part of the work should be mailed to: Permissions Department, Harcourt, Inc., 6277 Sea Harbor Drive, Orlando, FL 32887-6777.

Copyrights and acknowledgments begin on page 335 and constitute a continuation of the copyright page.

*Address for Domestic Orders*  
Harcourt College Publishers, 6277 Sea Harbor Drive, Orlando, FL 32887-6777  
800-782-4479

*Address for International Orders*  
International Customer Service  
Harcourt, Inc., 6277 Sea Harbor Drive, Orlando, FL 32887-6777  
407-345-3800  
(fax) 407-345-4060  
(e-mail) hbintl@harcourtbrace.com

*Address for Editorial Correspondence*  
Harcourt College Publishers, 301 Commerce Street, Suite 3700, Fort Worth, TX 76102

*Web Site Address*  
<http://www.harcourtcollege.com>

Printed in the United States of America

9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 066 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Harcourt College Publishers

*To TK, JJ, and CW*

*When . . . you Think of Things, you find sometimes that a Thing  
which seemed very Thingish inside you is quite different when it  
gets out into the open and has other people looking at it.*

*—A. A. Milne*

# Preface

## To the Instructor

*An Introduction to Critical Reading* is an anthology of poems, short stories, essays, and college textbook chapters. The instructor's manual that accompanies the anthology presents an approach to developmental reading that departs from the traditional, skills-based approach. The manual suggests ways of using the pieces in the anthology to improve reading skills and critical thinking. The anthology is different from other developmental reading texts in its rationale and in its content.

The pieces in the anthology were selected not on the basis of a "readability formula," but because they are representative of the materials college students are required to read and because they encourage critical thinking. The selections for each genre present a range of difficulties, permitting instructors to choose texts appropriate to the abilities of their specific classes. Texts containing extensive literary allusions or problems of style, such as stream of consciousness, are not included. Such pieces require more time than the primary purposes of a reading course allow.

The selections were also made with critical thinking and critical reading in mind. A detailed discussion of critical thinking, a term that has a variety of meanings, is included in the introductory essay of the instructor's manual. Suffice it to say that the heart of critical thinking is an active, personal involvement stemming from a desire "to know." Students who become actively involved in a text will eventually come to terms with it. This does not mean students will understand all of the information contained in a piece or make every possible inference. But most college students, regardless of their developmental status, can discern the essential message of a piece if they want "to know." The pieces in the anthology revolve around issues that are of interest to most readers: family, relationships, society, and so forth. The selections also reflect the cultural diversity of college readers. Roughly half of the selections are by women and nonwhite writers.

To eliminate some problems of comprehension and to provide the best possible opportunity for active involvement, the anthology provides the following aids:

1. Definitions of difficult words that are not defined in context
2. Explanatory notes on allusions to literature, history, art, and so on
3. A glossary that includes definitions and examples of common literary and rhetorical devices

The anthology does not include questions on the content of the pieces. The instructor's manual discusses the importance of encouraging student questions and student-generated criteria. Questions that come from editors invite a mechanical investigation of what the editors think to be important. Such an investigation limits the possibilities of a piece of writing and limits student thinking to those points addressed by the questions. There is a need, of course, for some teacher questions and teacher-generated criteria. The instructor's manual provides such criteria, not only for evaluating the content of a piece, but also for developing critical thinking. The suggestions in the manual are

not meant to limit the teacher's approach, but to suggest typical questions that can accomplish specific goals.

The apparatus is in the instructor's manual. None is included in the anthology for the following reasons:

1. Students tend either to ignore explanatory material or to embrace it so completely that they do not go beyond it and think independently
2. Students become better readers by reading—not by being told how to read
3. Textbook generalizations about how an adult *should* read, how *good* readers read, and what a reader *ought* to glean from a piece of writing exclude consideration of the great variety of effective reading styles and of the possible differences in readers' interpretations
4. An instructor's ideas about the reading process or about a "good" college reader are far more suitable for that teacher's actual audience than a textbook apparatus written for an implied audience

The instructor's manual contains the following:

1. An introductory essay, providing teachers with the rationale for the anthology, explaining the nature of critical thinking, and providing general guidelines for helping students develop critical thinking
2. An essay discussing the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* and its use in helping students understand how they most effectively process information
3. A discussion of each selection in the anthology, explicating content and pointing out issues that teachers may want to explore in class discussions
4. Specific suggestions for each piece contained in the anthology. These suggestions are intended to involve students in the content of the piece and to encourage the development of critical thinking. Cross-genre studies are suggested frequently to assist those instructors who prefer such studies to the genre-by-genre approach.
5. An essay suggesting a variety of ways in which students might approach textbook reading
6. The testbanks from the textbook chapters' instructor's manual
7. Sample outlines of selected textbook chapters

The method recommended in the instructor's manual is practical. It not only results in measurable improvement, but it also encourages positive treatment of students. The philosophy of the approach presented in this textbook corresponds to the motto of the Scripps Howard newspapers: "Give light and the people will find their own way." The light students need is the practice of critical thinking—a tool they will need regardless of the direction they take.

## Acknowledgments

Tracey Kell, University of Alabama at Birmingham; Jane Johnson, Oasis; and Caroline West, University of Alabama at Birmingham have my deepest gratitude. They graciously read everything I gave them, consistently provided me with support and encouragement, and generously shared their observations and insights. Tracey is due special thanks: she willingly critiqued my writing and kindly wrote an essay discussing the connection between the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* and learning styles. (Her essay is in the Instructor's Manual.)

Stephen Dalphin and Jill Johnson of Harcourt have been remarkable. I thank them for their enthusiasm and direction as well as their patience and flexibility.

Craig Beard, librarian at the University of Alabama in Birmingham, has cheerfully provided me with his expert assistance any time I requested it.



I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to the many teachers who have contacted me to ask questions, offer suggestions, and discuss their experiences using this book. This communication has been affirming, exciting, and thought-provoking.

For more types of assistance and kindness than I could possibly name, I thank the following: Alex Anderson, Scott Anderson, Bert Andrews, Tom Ashe, Craig Beard, Susan Blair, Henny Bordwin, Malka Bordwin, Milton Bordwin, Judy Boyer, Flowers Braswell, Tom Brown, Sid Burgess, Jason Burnett, Monica Cantwell, John Coley, Stella Cocoris, Kendall Cooper, Tynes Cowan, Robby Cox, Keith Cullen, Randa Graves, Tim Douglas, Betty Duff, Barbara Enlow, Matt Fifolt, Grace Finkel, Paula Fulton, Delores Gallo, Al Gardener, Virginia Gauld, Travis Gordon, Lee Griner, John Haggerty, Lois Harris, Richard Harrison, Barbara Hill, Cindy Holmes, Helen Jackson, Jane Johnson, Diana Kato, Marilyn Kurata, Susan Labischin, Cindy Lefoy, Pat Lisella, Marcy Ludorf, Lisa Madison, Haden Marsh, Randy Marsh, Dot McCraney, Britt McCraney, Nathan McCraney, Randy McCraney, Susan Mitchell, Stephen Morris, Mark Myers, Rose Norman, Colm O'Dunlaing, Iris O'Dunlaing, Jane Patton, Bob Penny, Terry Proctor, Candace Ridington, Beebe Roberts, Dave Roberts, Penny Sanchez, Eluteria Torrez Sanchez, Richard Torrez Sanchez, John Schnorrenberg, Connie Stavros, John Stryjewski, Melissa Tate, Judy Traylor, Reuben Triplett, Carol Wada, John Walker, Caroline West, Manly West, Patty Wheeler-Andrews, Gayle Whidby, and Barbara Williams.

Thanks as well to following reviewers: Dorothy Hoffner, Union Community College; Patricia DeLessio, Dutchess Community College; Joyce Kammeraad, Inver Hills Community College; Anne Lehman, Milwaukee Area Technical College; Rose Wassman, De Anza College; and Janet Elder, Richland College.

Finally, I thank my students, who challenge me, inspire me, and always remind me that true learning involves reaching beyond one's grasp.

## **To the Student**

The readings in this book were selected for a number of reasons. First, they are all excellent pieces of writing. Second, they comprise a representative sample of four common types of writing: poetry, fiction, essays, and textbook chapters. Third, they are thought-provoking.

This third reason is of utmost importance to the purposes of this book. Meaningful learning occurs when one is actively involved in the learning process, when one finds something in the process that is of personal importance. The majority of readings in this book offer ideas that are likely to be important to most readers. Literature, in particular, offers a field of universal ideas—after all, the essence of literature is life—and this is one reason such a wide variety of literature has been included.

Reading allows one the opportunity to examine one's own principles and the principles of others. The Socratic position is that the unexamined life is not worth living. This position suggests that one must value one's own thinking and judgment. It is grounded in the belief that examining—questioning—is the foundation for being free.

Leah McCraney

# Contents

Preface vii

## PART 1 POETRY 1

- Kristine Batey **Lot's Wife** 3  
**Genesis 19:12-26** 4  
E. A. Robinson **Richard Cory** 4  
Alden Nowlan **Warren Pryor** 5  
Robert Frost **The Road Not Taken** 5  
Langston Hughes **I, Too** 6  
Langston Hughes **Harlem** 7  
Langston Hughes **Mother to Son** 7  
Robert Hayden **Those Winter Sundays** 8  
Roland Flint **Austere** 8  
Gary Soto **A Red Palm** 9  
Rita Dove **Daystar** 10  
Nikki Giovanni **Once a Lady Told Me** 10  
Edgar Lee Masters **Four Poems from *Spoon River Anthology***  
    **Minerva Jones** 11  
    **"Indignation" Jones** 11  
    **Doctor Meyers** 12  
    **Mrs. Meyers** 13  
Marge Piercy **Barbie Doll** 13  
M. Carl Holman **Mr. Z** 14  
Howard Nemerov **The Vacuum** 15  
Rhea Tregebov **What Makes You Sure** 15  
Alden Nowlan **Weakness** 16  
Adrienne Rich **Power** 17  
William Blake **The Chimney Sweeper from *Songs of Innocence*** 17  
William Blake **The Chimney Sweeper from *Songs of Experience*** 18  
Thomas Hardy **Channel Firing** 19  
Wilfred Owen **Dulce et Decorum Est** 20  
W. H. Auden **Musée des Beaux Arts** 21  
Willie Morris **The Accident** 23  
Anne Sexton **To a Friend Whose Work Has Come to Triumph** 23  
X. J. Kennedy **In a Prominent Bar in Secaucus One Day** 24  
Percy Bysshe Shelley **Ozymandias** 25  
Robert Frost **Mending Wall** 26  
W. H. Auden **The Unknown Citizen** 28



- Alastair Reid **Curiosity** 29  
A. E. Housman **Terence, This Is Stupid Stuff** 30

## **PART 2 FICTION 33**

- Katharine Brush **Birthday Party** 35  
Shirley Jackson **The Lottery** 35  
Jess Mowry **Crusader Rabbit** 41  
James Thurber **The Catbird Seat** 45  
Zora Neale Hurston **The Gilded Six-Bits** 52  
Ray Bradbury **The Veldt** 60  
Eudora Welty **A Worn Path** 69  
Katherine Anne Porter **He** 75  
Tillie Olsen **I Stand Here Ironing** 82  
Reginald McKnight **The Kind of Light That Shines on Texas** 87  
Adam Schwartz **Where Is It Written?** 96  
Andre Dubus **The Fat Girl** 108  
Joyce Carol Oates **Life after High School** 118  
Barbara Kingsolver **Islands on the Moon** 129  
Alice Walker **A Sudden Trip Home in the Spring** 146  
William Faulkner **A Rose for Emily** 154  
Flannery O'Connor **Revelation** 162  
John Steinbeck **The Chrysanthemums** 177

## **PART 3 ESSAYS 185**

- Dick Gregory **Shame** 187  
Randall Williams **Daddy Tucked the Blanket** 189  
George Orwell **A Hanging** 192  
Edward Koch **Death and Justice** 196  
Amy Tan **Mother Tongue** 200  
Jill Neimark **Why We Need Miss America** 204  
Cynthia Fox **Starved Out** 209  
Deborah Gregory **Heavy Judgement: A Sister Talks about the Pain of "Living Large"** 215  
Nancy Gibbs **When Is It Rape?** 221  
Andrew Kupfer **The U.S. Needs a New Policy: More Toughness in Fighting the Hard Stuff** 225  
Molly Ivins **Time for a Change on Drugs: Americans Are Ahead of the Politicians on This One** 231  
Joseph A. Califano **Legalization of Narcotics: Myths and Reality** 233  
Stephen Chapman **The Prisoner's Dilemma** 237  
D. Stanley Eitzen **Violent Crime: Myths, Facts, and Solutions** 244  
Ronald Bailey **Seven Doomsday Myths about the Environment** 251  
Lester R. Brown, Christopher Flavin, and Sandra Postel **A Planet in Jeopardy** 257  
Richard Rodriguez **Does America Still Exist?** 263

## PART 4 TEXTBOOK CHAPTERS 267

Virginia G. Latta, Cathy A. McDonald, and Janice W. Roberts **Investigation I**  
from *Principles of Biology* 269

Joseph R. Conlin **Presidency in Crisis** from *The American Past: A Survey of American History* 285

Louise E. Boone and David L. Kurtz **Social Responsibility and Business Ethics**  
from *Contemporary Business* 307

Glossary 333

Credits 335

Index 337

1

# P o e t r y





# Lot's Wife

*Kristine Batey*

- While Lot, the conscience of a nation,  
struggles with the Lord,  
she struggles with the housework.  
The City of Sin is where  
5 she raises the children.  
Ba'al or Adonai—  
Whoever is God—  
the bread must still be made  
and the doorsills swept.
- 10 The Lord may kill the children tomorrow,  
but today they must be bathed and fed.  
Well and good to condemn your neighbor's religion;  
but weren't they there  
when the baby was born,  
15 and when the well collapsed?  
While her husband communes with God,  
she tucks the children into bed.  
In the morning when he tells her of the judgment,  
she puts down the lamp she is cleaning  
20 and calmly begins to pack.  
In between bundling up the children  
and deciding what will go,  
she runs for a moment  
to say goodbye to the herd,  
25 gently patting each soft head  
with tears in her eyes for the animals that will not understand.  
She smiles blindly to the woman  
who held her hand at childbed.  
It is easy for eyes that have always turned to heaven  
30 not to look back;  
those that have been—by necessity—drawn to earth  
cannot forget that life is lived from day to day.  
Good, to a God, and good in human terms  
are two different things?
- 35 On the breast of the hill, she chooses to be human,  
and turns, in farewell—  
and never regrets  
the sacrifice.

## NOTES

***Ba'al or Adonai*** (l. 6): Ba'al is the name for the Canaanite god of Lot's time; Adonai is one of the names of the Hebrew god.

***communes*** (l. 16): communicates

***at childbed*** (l. 28): at childbirth

## Genesis 19:12–26

The two angels said to Lot, "Have you anyone else here, sons-in-law, sons or daughters, or any who belong to you in the city? Get them out of this place, because we are going to destroy it. The outcry against it has been so great that the Lord has sent us to destroy it." So Lot went out and spoke to his intended sons-in-law. He said, "Be quick and leave this place; the Lord is going to destroy the city." But they did not take him seriously.

As soon as it was dawn, the angels urged Lot to go, saying, "Be quick, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away when the city is punished." When he lingered, they took him by the hand, with his wife and his daughters, and, because the Lord had spared him, led him on until he was outside the city. When they had brought them out, they said, "Flee for your lives; do not look back and do not stop anywhere in the Plain. Flee to the hills or you will be swept away." Lot replied, "No, sirs. You have shown your servant favour and you have added to your unfailing care for me by saving my life, but I cannot escape to the hills; I shall be overtaken by the disaster, and die. Look, here is a town, only a small place, near enough for me to reach quickly. Let me escape to it—it is very small—and save my life." He said to him, "I grant your request: I will not overthrow this town you speak of. But flee there quickly, because I can do nothing until you are there." That is why the place is called Zoar. The sun had risen over the land as Lot entered Zoar; and then the Lord rained down fire and brimstone from the skies on Sodom and Gomorrah. He overthrew those cities and destroyed all the Plain, with everyone living there and everything growing in the ground. But Lot's wife, behind him, looked back, and she turned into a pillar of salt.

### NOTES

*two angels* (par. 1): messengers sent by God

*Zoar* (par. 2): The word Zoar means "small."

## Richard Cory

*E. A. Robinson*

Whenever Richard Cory went down town,  
We people on the pavement looked at him;  
He was a gentleman from sole to crown,  
Clean favored, and imperially slim.

- 5 And he was always quietly arrayed,  
And he was always human when he talked;  
But still he fluttered pulses when he said,  
"Good-morning," and he glittered when he walked.  
And he was rich—yes, richer than a king—
- 10 And admirably schooled in every grace:  
In fine, we thought that he was everything  
To make us wish that we were in his place.  
So on we worked, and waited for the light,

- And went without the meat, and cursed the bread;  
 15 And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,  
 Went home and put a bullet through his head.

## NOTES

*imperially* (l. 4): royally*arrayed* (l. 5): finely dressed*in fine* (l. 11): in short or in summary

## Warren Pryor

*Alden Nowlan*

- When every pencil meant a sacrifice  
 his parents boarded him at school in town,  
 slaving to free him from the stony fields,  
 the meagre acreage that bore them down.
- 5 They blushed with pride when, at his graduation,  
 they watched him picking up the slender scroll,  
 his passport from the years of brutal toil  
 and lonely patience in a barren hole.
- When he went in the Bank their cups ran over.
- 10 They marvelled how he wore a milk-white shirt  
 work days and jeans on Sundays, He was saved  
 from their thistle-strewn farm and its red dirt.
- And he said nothing. Hard and serious  
 like a young bear inside his teller's cage,
- 15 his axe-hewn hands upon the paper bills  
 aching with empty strength and throttled rage.

## NOTES

*barren* (l. 8): infertile*thistle* (l. 12): prickly weed*axe-hewn* (l. 15): shaped as if with an axe*throttled* (l. 16): suppressed, stifled

## The Road Not Taken

*Robert Frost*

- Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
 And sorry I could not travel both  
 And be one traveler, long I stood  
 And looked down one as far as I could
- 5 To where it bent in the undergrowth;



Then took the other, as just as fair,  
 And having perhaps the better claim,  
 Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
 Though as for that, the passing there  
 10 Had worn them really about the same,  
 And both that morning equally lay  
 In leaves no step had trodden black.  
 Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
 Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
 15 I doubted if I should ever come back.  
 I shall be telling this with a sigh  
 Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
 Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
 I took the one less traveled by,  
 20 And that has made all the difference.

#### NOTES

**two roads diverged** (l. 1): The road became two roads that went in different directions.

**undergrowth** (l. 5): plants or bushes growing beneath trees

**wanted wear** (l. 8): lacked or needed wear

**trodden** (l. 12): crushed

**hence** (l. 17): from this time

## I, Too

*Langston Hughes*

I, too, sing America.  
 I am the darker brother.  
 They send me to eat in the kitchen  
 When company comes,  
 5 But I laugh,  
 And eat well,  
 And grow strong.  
 Tomorrow,  
 I'll sit at the table  
 10 When company comes.  
 Nobody'll dare  
 Say to me,  
 "Eat in the kitchen,"  
 Then.  
 15 Besides,  
 They'll see how beautiful I am  
 And be ashamed—  
 I, too, am America.

# Harlem

*Langston Hughes*

What happens to a dream deferred?  
 Does it dry up  
 like a raisin in the sun?  
 Or fester like a sore—  
 5 And then run?  
 Does it stink like rotten meat?  
 Or crust and sugar over—  
 like a syrupy sweet?  
 Maybe it just sags  
 10 like a heavy load.  
 Or does it explode?

## NOTES

**Harlem** (title): an area of New York City, predominantly African American  
**deferred** (l. 1): postponed or put off

**fester** (l. 4) and **run** (l. 5): “Fester” refers to the swelling of inflamed tissue; when the tissue opens, pus is released or “runs.”

**crust and sugar over** . . . (ll. 7–8): After a period of time, a sugary crust will form on some syrupy sweets (such as jelly and honey).

# Mother to Son

*Langston Hughes*

Well, son, I'll tell you:  
 Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.  
 It's had tacks in it,  
 And splinters,  
 5 And boards torn up,  
 And places with no carpet on the floor—  
 Bare.  
 But all the time  
 I've been a-climbin' on,  
 10 And reachin' landin's  
 And turnin' corners,  
 And sometimes goin' in the dark  
 Where there ain't been no light.  
 So, boy, don't you turn back.  
 15 Don't you set down on the steps  
 'Cause you finds it kinder hard.  
 Don't you fall now—  
 For I've still goin', honey,