

THE NORTON READER

Linda H. Peterson

John C. Brereton



SHORTER ELEVENTH EDITION

The Norton Reader

An Anthology of Nonfiction



SHORTER ELEVENTH EDITION

Linda H. Peterson, General Editor

YALE UNIVERSITY



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Preface



The Norton Reader brings together a wide selection of essays on a wide range of subjects—from Chang-Rae Lee recalling his return home to cook Korean food for his dying mother to Barbara Tuchman describing the eruption of bubonic plague in medieval Europe to Isaac Asimov meditating on “The Eureka Phenomenon.” With 212 selections in the Regular Edition and 121 in the Shorter Edition, *The Norton Reader* offers depth, breadth, and variety for instructors who wish to teach the essay in its many modes and forms—including the seminal experiments of Michel de Montaigne and Francis Bacon, the modern classics of George Orwell, Virginia Woolf, and E. B. White, and contemporary examples by such diverse writers as Jamaica Kincaid, Adam Goodheart, Andrew Sullivan, Molly Ivins, and Wayson Choy.

Since the first edition in 1965, *The Norton Reader* has upheld a tradition of anthologizing excellent prose. Arthur Eastman, the founding editor, always insisted that essays be selected for their achievement: “Excellence would be their pillar of smoke by day, of fire by night,” he wrote in the preface to the eighth edition. With this vision, the original editors of the *Reader* anthologized the classic essays that appeal to modern readers and that we now recognize as comprising the essay canon. Yet the *Reader* has also continued to revise, adapt, and renew itself by adding new writers who keep the essay alive (and lively) and whose writing appeals to new generations of student readers.

This new edition happily blends the new and the old, the innovative and the classic. Features that have long distinguished the *Reader* include:

- Both canonical and contemporary essays by authors as diverse as Dorothy Wordsworth and Toni Morrison, Henry David Thoreau and Steven Jay Gould, Martin Luther King Jr. and Sonia Shah.
- Coverage of important themes and influential styles of writing. Sections on education, language and communication, nature and the en-

vironment, history, and ethics, among others, introduce students to important academic ideas and ongoing civic debates. Instructors have the flexibility to use these sections as they choose.

- Sufficient pedagogical apparatus to serve instructors' needs, but not too much to overwhelm the readings or distract the readers. *The Norton Reader* provides students with information they need to understand the essays, yet gives instructors flexibility in the classroom by allowing them to present the texts as best suits their interests and needs.
- A section called "Authors," located at the end of the volume, provides information about the men and women who wrote the essays, and allows readers to choose whether to find out about the authors before reading their essays or to encounter the authors as unknowns and let them identify themselves within their essays.

Among the new features in the Shorter eleventh edition: we have added materials that expand the formal range of the essay and locate it within the larger context of visual culture:

- Thirty-one new selections, including essays that represent the work of American, Canadian, African, Indian, English, and Caribbean writers. New voices include Fatema Mernissi meditating on the powerful concept of the "harem," Wayson Choy recounting his search for his birth parents, Jack Hitt debating the causes of binge drinking, and Amy Cunningham wondering why women smile so much. New canonical essays include Henry David Thoreau's "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For," Aldo Leopold's "The Land Ethic," and the "Letter to her Daughter" by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu.
- Visual images—photographs, drawings, graphs, and other illustrations—that inspired the authors or accompanied the essays are included, with original captions, for fifteen selections. We hope that these images will encourage readers to think about the ways in which the visual and the verbal interact in modern culture, and the ways in which images enrich, highlight, and sometimes challenge the written text.
- New contextual notes provide information about when and where the essay first appeared and, if it began as a talk, when and where it was delivered and to what audience.
- New and revised questions accompany every essay in the Shorter, emphasizing both individual response and collaborative effort while encouraging students to become active critical readers and writers.
- A complete instructor's *Guide to the Norton Reader*, with new entries written by Anne Fernald, Paul Heilker, and Rajini Srikanth, draws on the combined experience of five composition teachers and offers a wealth of suggestions for classroom discussion and writing assignments. Six sample syllabi provide possibilities for teaching the essays in courses on academic writing, argument and persuasion, great ideas and enduring questions, themes of race, class, and gender, and the form of the modern essay.

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In selecting new essays for this edition, we have been generously aided by the wide reading and classroom knowledge of four scholar-teachers: Anne Fernald (DePauw University), Paul Heilker (Virginia Tech), Ira Nadel (University of British Columbia), and Rajini Srikanth (University of Massachusetts–Boston). Drawing on their different areas of expertise, all four nominated new essays, and three have joined us as authors of the *Guide*.

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To Students: Reading and Writing with *The Norton Reader*



The Norton Reader includes essays on a wide range of subjects—some familiar, others more specialized; some personal, others highly public. You'll find the familiar and personal in sections like "Personal Report" and "People, Places," the specialized and public in sections like "Ethics" and "Science and Technology." "Personal Report" appeared in the first edition, "Nature and the Environment" in the ninth. Some essays—Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail" and Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal," for example—are constant favorites. Other essays—approximately one-quarter—are new to this edition.

The editors read widely in order to include a variety of authors writing on a variety of topics in a variety of ways. We include male and female voices; American, British, and Canadian voices; African American, Asian American, American Indian, Caribbean, and Hispanic American voices. Some essays are calculatedly challenging, others relatively simple. Some are long, others short. Although most were published recently, some are older; although most are written in English, a few are translated from other languages. What they have in common is excellence: we, as the editors, without actually defining good writing for ourselves or for each other, have agreed on the inclusion of each essay. We find their authors, sometimes well known, sometimes virtually unknown, speaking with authority and seeing with distinctive angles of vision. We find their subjects important, timely, timeless, engaging. We find their writing convincing and clear, their style lean when elaboration is not required, yet adequate to complexity.

The Norton Reader contains a large number of essays, more than any in-

structor will assign during a semester. We know that there are many kinds of college writing courses; we know that instructors link reading and writing in many different ways. We aim in *The Norton Reader* to accommodate all or most of them. We leave it to your instructors to direct you through the essays, to decide which ones to assign, and to show you how to approach them to discover their richness. We also hope you'll choose to read some extra essays on your own—essays whose titles or topics appeal to you.

READING WITH A CRITICAL EYE

Most of the essays in *The Norton Reader* originally appeared in magazines or books written for educated general readers. These essays were intended to be read by people who wanted to know—or know more—about their subjects, who knew—or knew of—their authors, or who were tempted to launch into unfamiliar subjects written about by authors they had never heard of because they encountered these essays in publications they ordinarily read. In the world outside the classroom, readers bring their own interests and motivations to the essays they read. Putting them in a textbook almost inevitably makes reading them seem artificial.

Even so, we, as editors, want to help you read these essays critically by understanding their contexts and thus making your reading process become more “real.” When you begin reading an essay assigned by your instructor, we suggest using some or all of these tactics:

- Preview the essay: Think about its title, read its opening paragraph, skim the topic sentences. Look at the contextual note we have provided on the first page of each essay, and try to imagine the experience, issue, or debate that motivated the essayist to write.
- Read the questions included after the essay: Think about the issues—the topic, structure, or language—that the questions pose, or imagine a personal response to the final question—usually a writing assignment.
- Write in the margins: Note points that seem interesting and important; forecast issues that you think the writer should address; pose questions of your own. Talk back.
- Note what confuses you: In addition to points that you understand, note points that you fail to understand and save them for class discussion. Failures can be as instructive as successes, and recognizing your difficulties as a reader will help sharpen your skills.
- Summarize the essay: Write a summary of the essay in your own words in a journal or class notebook; make a list of its key points; list the questions that essayist raises and answers.
- Keep a reading journal: Make notes about what you read; record your responses to each essay; write questions about what puzzled you and what you want to discuss with classmates.
- Reread the essay: If possible, read the essay for a second time before you discuss it in class; if you lack time, reread the key passages and para-

graphs that you marked in your marginal notes. Ask yourself what you see the second time that you didn't register on first reading.

As these tactics suggest, reading need not be only a private activity; it can also become a communal and cooperative one. Sharing reading journals in class helps to demystify reading and clarify points of confusion. Discussion, in class as a whole or in smaller groups, can elucidate your own and others' interpretations of the essays, as well as differences in interpretations. What interests and motivations do we bring to particular essays? Do some interests and motivations yield better readings than others? What strategies do we employ when we read? Are there other useful ones? What meanings do readers agree about, what meanings do they disagree about? Can we account for our differences? What are responsive and responsible readings? What are irresponsible readings, and how do we decide? All these questions—and others—can emerge as private reading moves into the public arena of the classroom.

To help you read each essay, we've added some aids to explain facts and information that the original readers of these essays probably knew and that might help you comprehend the essay more readily:

- **Contextual notes:** We've placed these notes at the bottom of the first page of each essay. They provide information about when and where the essay first appeared and, if it began as a talk, when and where it was delivered and to what audience. For example, Maya Angelou's "Graduation" comes from her autobiography, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, published in 1969; after the book's popular success, Angelou continued her life story in five sequential volumes, most recently in *A Song Flung Up to Heaven* (2002). Scott Russell Sanders's "Looking at Women" appeared in the *Georgia Review*, a small circulation literary magazine, whereas Jack Hitt's "The Battle of the Binge" was first published in the *New York Times Magazine* in a section called "The Way We Live Now." Other essays were first presented in oral form: David McCullough's "Recommended Itinerary" began as a graduation address at Middlebury College in 1986 and then was revised for an essay collection, *Brave Companions: Portraits in History* (1992); the "Cherokee Memorials," along with a dozen supporting documents, were delivered aloud as well as presented in writing to the United States Congress in 1830.

We try to explain a little about the books, magazines, and newspapers that published these essays—for example, that the *New York Times Magazine* is a large circulation weekly magazine included with the Sunday newspaper; the *Georgia Review*, a small-circulation literary journal published three times a year by the University of Georgia. As editors, we could swamp *The Norton Reader* with additional information about publication and authorship, but we prefer to include more essays and keep contextual information brief.

- **Authors' biographies:** The section called "Authors," located at the end of the volume, provides information about the men and women who wrote the essays. Putting this information at the end provides you with a

choice. You may know something about an author already and not wish to consult this section. You may prefer to find out something about an author before you read his or her essay. Or you may just prefer to encounter the authors as unknowns, letting them identify themselves within the essay. Sometimes knowing who authors are and where their voices come from helps readers hear them and grasp what they say—but sometimes it doesn't.

- **Illustrations:** For this edition of *The Norton Reader*, we've added photographs, drawings, graphs, and other visuals that originally accompanied the essays. In some cases, as with Toni Morrison's "Strangers," the author began writing her essay by thinking about photographs, pondering their significance, and interpreting the images. In other cases, such as James Thurber's "University Days" or Fred Strebeigh's "The Wheels of Freedom: Bicycles in China," the authors provided images to accompany their prose: in Thurber's case, his own drawings of his professor and a classmate; in Strebeigh's, photographs he took during his travels in China at the time of the Tiananmen uprising. In still others, the illustrations were added after the essays were written, often by an editor responsible for seeing the work through the press, sometimes in consultation with the author.

As you look at the visual images, you might think about the ways in which they enrich, highlight, and possibly challenge the essay itself. Do the visual images primarily illustrate the essay, or do they emphasize a feature unexplained by the essayist? Do the images enrich one aspect of the writing and make that aspect clearer, or do they minimize certain aspects of the subject, perhaps aspects you find important? What do you see in the images that the essayist discusses or explains? What do you see that he or she overlooks or minimizes? We have included the images original to the essays to allow them to "speak" to each other, as they did at the time of the essays' original publication.

- **Annotations:** For many essays, we provide explanatory footnotes—a sure sign that this is an academic textbook. Most commercial magazines do not include footnotes, whereas academic writing often does. We identify footnotes the authors originally wrote themselves, in square brackets, as author's notes. But we've written most of the footnotes that help with difficult words and allusions. Our guidelines go something like this:
 1. We generally *don't* define words that appear in standard collegiate dictionaries unless they are foreign. If an unfamiliar word is central to the meaning of an essay, the author is likely to define it. If the author doesn't, you can consult your dictionary or guess its meaning from the context.
 2. We *do* provide information about most people, places, works, theories, and other unfamiliar things. For example, for Maya Angelou's "Graduation," we explain Gabriel Prosser, Nat Turner, and Harriet Tubman but not Abraham Lincoln and Christopher

Columbus; we also explain Stamps (an Arkansas town) and “Invictus” (a poem).

3. We try to explain but not interpret; that is, we give information but leave it to readers to interpret the essays by deciding how the authors frame and use that information, how it adds to their argument or expression, how it contributes to their meanings. Francis Bacon’s “Of Youth and Age,” for example, requires extensive annotation. It is possible to figure out from the essay itself that Julius Caesar and Septimius Severus succeeded later in life, after stormy youths; but our note actually translates the Latin quotation about Severus, confirms their late success by giving dates, and explains that Severus, like Caesar, ruled Rome. Our notes for “Of Youth and Age” measure the distance between Bacon’s original readers and readers today. Bacon assumed that his readers read Latin, were familiar with ancient and European history, and were willing to take as illustrative examples of “youth” and “age” male rulers and public figures. We give dates and facts but leave you to work out the meanings implicit in Bacon’s examples.

Our experience in the classroom helps us as editors to make guesses about what you know, what you don’t know, and what you may need or want to know. For some essays, we’ve asked students who have taken our courses to read the new essays and tell us what annotations to add. But, despite our good intentions, you can be sure that we’ll fail you in some places by not explaining enough or that we’ll annoy you in others by explaining what you find clear. When we fail, ask your instructors for help; when we annoy, take our efforts as well intentioned.

Here’s the most important point: Annotation, while it *facilitates* the making of meaning in reading, can never take its place. Reading is an active process. Experienced readers take responsibility for that action by reading critically, constructing meaning, interpreting what they read, not just by moving their eyes over the page and expecting meaning to occur automatically. If our annotations help you read critically, then use them; if they interfere, then just continue reading the main text.

- **Questions:** After each essay in the Shorter edition we include questions to help you become an active reader, and often these questions give directions to *do* something.
 1. Some questions ask you to locate, mark, or identify because we want you to notice the essays’ structural features, the patterns that undergird and make manifest their meanings. Narrative, description, exposition, persuasion, and argument take conventional shapes—or distort them—and recognizing these shapes enhances comprehension.
 2. Other questions ask you to paraphrase meanings—that is, to express them in your own words, to extend points by providing additional examples, or to reframe points by connecting them with other essays.

3. Still other questions ask you to notice rhetorical features that contribute to meanings: the author's choice of title or epigraph, the author's voice (or persona), the author's assumptions about audience (and how the author speaks to the audience), the author's choice of style and forms of expression. We ask you to consider the effects of these rhetorical choices.
4. At least one question, usually the last, asks you to write. Sometimes, we ask you to demonstrate comprehension by an informed assent—that is, by bringing in something from your own experience or reading that extends an essay. Sometimes, we ask for an informed dissent—that is, by bringing in something from your experience or knowledge that qualifies the author's argument or calls it into question. Often, we ask you to compare or contrast one author's position with another's—especially when their positions seem fundamentally opposed. Or we ask you to adapt one of the essay's rhetorical strategies to a topic of your own choice and to make the essay your own by basing it on personal experience.

Readers write, writers read. The processes are connected, and we have tried to make the questions concern them both. Making meaning by writing is the flip side of making it by reading, and we hope to engage you in both processes. In neither is meaning passed from hand to hand like nickels, dimes, and quarters. Instead, it is constructed—as in the making of quilts or houses or institutions.

WRITING WITH AN ACTIVE VOICE

The process of making meaning by writing is less mysterious than the process of making it by reading. Nowadays most instructors, however they choose to link reading and writing, emphasize process and multiple products—that is, the first drafts and revisions that precede final essays. As students, you may not have the time for as many as your instructor may desire, but distributing your time over several drafts rather than concentrating on a single one may turn out to be the most effective use of your time.

Experienced writers know they can't do everything at once: find or invent material, assess its usefulness, arrange it in paragraphs, and write it out in well-formed sentences. If you try to produce a good essay at one sitting, in a single draft, you are likely to thin out your material, lock yourself into a structure you don't have time to change, and write jumbled paragraphs and clumsy sentences that won't fully convey your meaning or intention. In the end, writing several drafts—in short periods spaced over more than a day—will produce a better essay, one that is thoughtful and deserving of a respectable grade.

For an experienced writer, the process of writing an essay typically includes these steps, which we urge you to take: