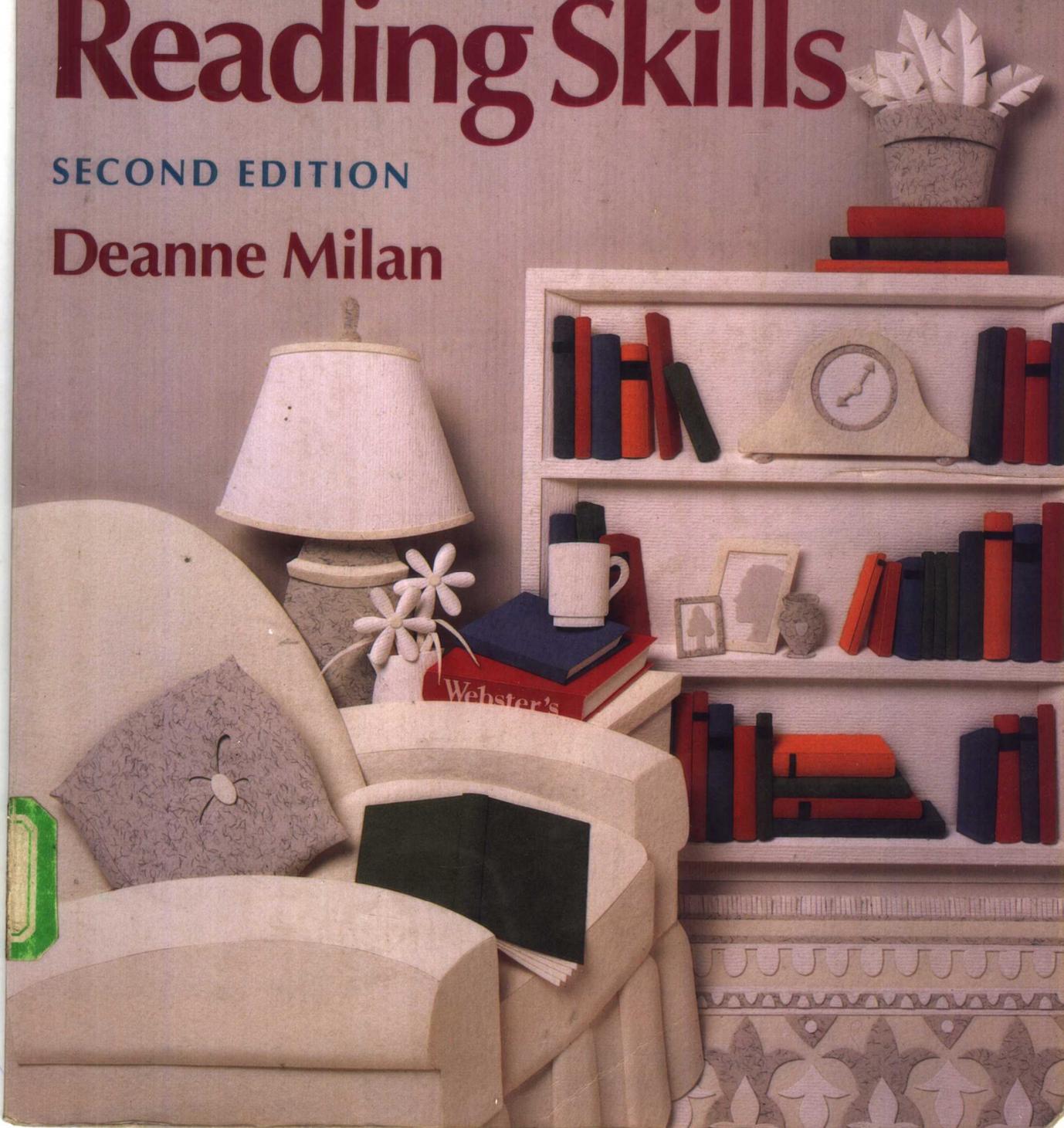


Improving Reading Skills

SECOND EDITION

Deanne Milan



Improving Reading Skills

SECOND
EDITION

Deanne Milan

City College of ~~San Francisco~~

McGraw-Hill, Inc.

New York St. Louis San Francisco Auckland Bogotá
Caracas Lisbon London Madrid Mexico City Milan
Montreal New Delhi San Juan Singapore
Sydney Tokyo Toronto

Improving Reading Skills

Copyright © 1992, 1988 by McGraw-Hill, Inc. All rights reserved.
Printed in the United States of America. Except as permitted under
the United States Copyright Act of 1976, no part of this publication
may be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means, or
stored in a data base or retrieval system, without the prior written
permission of the publisher.

7 8 9 0 DOC/DOC 9 9 8 7 6 5

ISBN 0-07-041906-X

This book was set in Stempel Garamond by General Graphic Services, Inc.
The editors were Lesley Denton, Lyn Beamesderfer, and Scott Amerman;
the designer was Joan Greenfield;
the production supervisor was Denise L. Puryear.
R. R. Donnelley & Sons Company was printer and binder.

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Milan, Deanne K.

Improving reading skills / Deanne K. Milan. — 2nd ed.

p. cm.

Includes index.

ISBN 0-07-041906-X

1. Reading (Higher education) 2. College readers. 3. Vocabulary.

I. Title.

LB2395.3.M56 1992

428.4'071'1—dc20

91-14503

PREFACE

The second edition of *Improving Reading Skills* is a textbook for college reading improvement courses. Like the first edition, it contains thirty-six reading selections drawn from a variety of sources, most of them contemporary, representing the sorts of reading students will encounter in their college courses and in their adult lives.

This new edition retains the underlying principles that made the first edition successful, while making some changes that should make the book more useful and appealing for both students and teachers. For an author, a second edition gives one the opportunity to clarify, to sort out what worked and what didn't, and to respond to and implement the many comments and suggestions from teachers, students, and reviewers gathered along the way.

Specifically, here are the changes incorporated in this new edition:

- An easier and more readable sample reading passage (class-tested)
- A clearer division among the book's five sections
- An introduction to each section, including brief suggestions for improving comprehension and for completing some of the more challenging exercises such as making inferences, distinguishing between levels of support, identifying transitional devices, and using context clues
- More emphasis on reading about contemporary controversial issues
- A consistent number of comprehension questions throughout the text and a simplified formula for students to calculate their comprehension scores
- Moving the comprehension score formula so that it now comes immediately after Exercises A and B
- Level of exercises more closely appropriate to the level of each reading
- The inclusion of either a paraphrasing or summarizing exercise following each selection in the Topics for Writing or Discussion

The book should help students read material of increasing difficulty with greater ease, understanding, and most important, confidence. My aim in revising *Improving Reading Skills* has been twofold: to choose readings on a variety of timely and interesting subjects that will engage students' attention and to provide a variety of exercises giving them the opportunity to practice all the skills needed for effective reading.

The readings throughout the text embrace a wide range of subjects: how American slaves were sold at auction, the phenomenon of superstitions, packrats who save useless things, the public's fascination with urban legends, the daily lives of teenage mothers, new teenage sexual mores, the rather surprising contents of toothpaste, the imprisonment of Japanese-American citizens on the West Coast during the Second World War, the increasingly thorny dispute over bilingual education, and the recent spate of Elvis sightings. While I have tried to present new materials not previously reprinted, inevitably I have also included some selections that many instructors will recognize as being effective in the classroom. A glance at the table of contents should identify these.

The readings are arranged by order of increasing difficulty. The shortest selection is about 800 words; the longest is 5900. However, the majority fall into the 1000- to 2000-word range, representing the length of the average newspaper or magazine article. Students should be able to read a selection and complete the exercises in one sitting. In addition, within each section the readings are arranged by difficulty according not only to vocabulary level and sentence length, but also the more subjectively defined criteria of subject matter and sentence structure. Students should, therefore, read them in order.

To introduce students to the organization of the text and to the types of exercises following each reading, the book begins with a short sample reading by Isaac Asimov, appropriately titled "Reading, Writing, and Technology," in which he expresses his concern over our increasing failure to educate our citizens. In addition to being a readable account of a serious issue, this sample reading introduces students to the skills they will be practicing during the course and, through sample exercises, shows them the process they must follow. Finally, it discusses the relative merits of the answer choices to the sample questions so that students learn to think through their responses carefully. Accordingly, the exercises require careful, concentrated reading and provide a structure to the reading process. Most crucial, as I have discovered in my own classes, students learn what to look for when they read.

As in the first edition, this new edition of *Improving Reading Skills* treats vocabulary extensively. In addition to two vocabulary exercises, each reading begins with a Vocabulary Preview. Using five or six words from the selection that might be unfamiliar to the reader, the preview acquaints students with word origins, word parts, and word families. These previews have the twin benefits of teaching readers the meanings of a few important words that they will encounter in the selection and, more important, showing them how to undertake a systematic study of vocabulary. Rather than being taught in isolation, the constituents of English vocabulary words—roots, prefixes, and suffixes—so useful for improving students' word attack skills, are taught only in the context of their reading.

The exercises following each selection are more extensive than those in most other textbooks, offering the student an opportunity to work on every aspect of reading. Step by step, each exercise provides practice on a particular skill at a level appropriate for the selection. Specifically, here is a description of the skills students will encounter in the readings:

- Determining the main idea and author's purpose
- Comprehending main ideas
- Distinguishing between main ideas and supporting details
- Making inferences
- Drawing conclusions
- Distinguishing between fact and opinion
- Understanding vocabulary and using new words
- Summarizing and paraphrasing

Instructors should note that not all the readings are followed by exercises in Drawing Conclusions or in Distinguishing between Fact and Opinion; these are included only where appropriate. Similarly, there are two kinds of exercises on levels of support. Instructors should consult the *Instructor's Manual* for a fuller explanation.

The text ends with two sections on using the dictionary and on study skills techniques. More specifically, there are suggestions for managing one's time and planning a study schedule, for putting into effect the SQ3R study skills method, along with instruction in how to annotate textbooks, how to write paraphrases and summaries, and how to take notes and outline textbook material. Each section includes a short excerpt from textbooks for students to practice with.

Instructors should refer to the *Instructor's Manual* for information on readability levels, brief summaries of each selection, suggestions for using the text, and answers to all the exercises.

I would like to thank Sheila Behr, City University of New York, City College; Joyce Crawford, Miami-Dade Community College; Ida Egli, Santa Rosa Junior College; Betty Perkinson, Tidewater Community College; Louise Tomlinson, University of Georgia; and Anne Willekens, Antelope Valley College, for their comments and suggestions on the manuscript. I would also like to thank Terry Alberigi, reference librarian at City College of San Francisco; and Lesley Denton, Lyn Beamesderfer, and Scott Amerman, my editors at McGraw-Hill.

Deanne Milan

TO THE STUDENT

THE AIMS OF THE TEXT

The thirty-six selections in the second edition of *Improving Reading Skills* are drawn from books, magazines, and newspapers. Most are nonfiction, representing both the kind of reading required of you in your other college courses and reading material you will encounter after you finish school for the rest of your life. The readings have been carefully chosen for their high interest level; they represent a variety of topics and writing styles. Some are entertaining; some are informative; some are persuasive. Many will give you something to think about. Since the selections are arranged by order of difficulty, as you work through the text, you will be able to sharpen and refine your comprehension, vocabulary, and analytical skills with increasingly harder readings.

The first aim of the text, then, is to help you improve those skills required to meet the demands of college work. The second aim, which actually overlaps with the first, is to help you discover that reading can be enjoyable. But first you have to know what to look for and know what is expected of you. Good reading involves a systematic approach, whether you read for an academic course or for pleasure. All the exercises in the text will show you, by means of consistent practice, what is involved in this process. Once you complete the selections, you should be better prepared to tackle all of your reading, from the daily newspaper, to the essay your English composition instructor assigns, to your psychology textbook.

IMPROVING YOUR VOCABULARY

A major premise of this book is that a good vocabulary is essential for good comprehension skills. Stated another way, if you don't know the meanings of many words a writer uses, you can't really understand accurately what he or she is saying. All you can hope is to come away with a hazy idea of the main point. This, clearly, is not reading.

The best way to improve your vocabulary is to commit yourself during the term to looking up unfamiliar words that you will encounter in your reading. At first this task may seem overwhelming. However, there are some ways you can learn the meanings of new words without turning to the dictionary. First, you can study the

Vocabulary Preview section that precedes each reading, each of which introduces you to several of the words you will encounter in the selection. Second, you can use context clues: often the meaning of a word is made clear by the way it is used in the sentence. Finally, you can break the word down into its component parts—prefix, root, and suffix—as a way of getting at its meaning.

However, if the word is still unclear to you after you go through these three steps, then you will probably have to go to the dictionary, especially if knowing the meaning of the word is essential for you to understand the passage. Furthermore, it is not cheating to look these words up, even though you are asked to do vocabulary exercises at the end of each selection.

Since your instructor may test you periodically on the vocabulary from these readings, you might also want to write new words and their definitions in a special notebook or on index cards. This way you can review quickly before tests, rather than having to hunt through the book to find them.

Good comprehension and good vocabulary skills are, therefore, interdependent. Unlike other reading improvement texts, this one attempts to integrate vocabulary study more closely with reading. The Vocabulary Preview sections, as mentioned above, introduce you to some of the words in the reading that may be unfamiliar to you.

To illustrate certain principles of the English language and to introduce you to these new words, each preview section is divided into three parts: Word Origins, Word Parts (prefixes, roots, and suffixes), and Word Families. The context of each new word—the way it is used in the reading—is always included to help you. These previews serve three functions: (1) They make your reading of the selection easier, giving you a “leg up”; you already know some of the meanings of the more difficult words. (2) They teach you word attack skills—how to break down and analyze new words. (3) Most important, they present many new words which you will add to your reading vocabulary. And you will be pleasantly surprised to find that words you meet in the earlier selections will turn up again in later ones and in your other reading, as well.

Before you begin the book, you may find it helpful to read the section on dictionary skills (pages 447–455) even if your instructor does not assign it at the beginning of the course.

ESSENTIAL READING SKILLS

The aims of the text, discussed earlier, are carried out in the organization of the exercise material. Each exercise focuses on a specific skill and builds on the preceding exercises. Taken together, they will help you read more systematically, they will show you what to look for when you read, and they will provide a structure for your reading. Here is a list of the specific skills you will work on during the term:

Determining the Main Idea and the Author’s Purpose

Comprehending Main Ideas

Recognizing Supporting Details

Distinguishing between Main Ideas and Supporting Details

Making Inferences

Drawing Conclusions

Distinguishing between Fact and Opinion

Analyzing Organization and Seeing Relationships

Understanding Vocabulary

Using Vocabulary

Writing Paraphrases and Short Summaries

The first two exercises will help improve both your comprehension and your retention of reading material. The remaining exercises, excluding the two vocabulary exercises, are intended to challenge your mind and to help you learn to think more clearly.

Since there has been an increased emphasis nationally on promoting critical thinking skills, both in schools and colleges and in the workaday world, these activities are important for your intellectual development. For example, you will be asked to determine the logical relationships and connections between ideas, to distinguish between fact and opinion, to assess supporting evidence, to determine the writer's attitude toward the topic, and to determine the method of development a writer uses to support the main idea.

The vocabulary exercises are self-explanatory—to show you the meanings of new words and to give you an opportunity to use them. The last exercise, Topics for Writing or Discussion, takes various forms, depending on the selection. Sometimes you will be asked to paraphrase (put into your own words) three or four sentences from the passage. Other times you might be asked to paraphrase an entire paragraph from the selection. Finally, you may be asked to summarize the important points from the reading.

The purpose of this may not be readily apparent to you. After all, you are enrolled in a reading, not a writing, course. But there is no question that reading and writing skills go hand in hand, and the best way to determine if you have understood what you have read is to see if you can put it into your own words. Before you begin any of these paraphrasing or summarizing exercises, you should read the section on paraphrasing and summarizing at the end of the text.

CALCULATING YOUR COMPREHENSION SCORE

The instructions accompanying each set of exercises ask you to do Exercises A and B without looking back at the selection. This will force you to read with greater attention and concentration than you would if you knew you could look back at the passage to refresh your memory. When you are finished with all the exercises, figure your

comprehension score by counting your correct answers for the first two exercises, according to the formula.

Since the two questions on determining the main idea and author's purpose are most crucial, each is worth 2 points, while comprehending-the-main-idea questions in Exercise B are each worth 1 point. By adding up the total number of points and multiplying by 10, you can arrive at your score, based on 100 as the total number of points possible. A score of above 70 percent is adequate. Since the selections become progressively more difficult, maintaining a score of 70 percent or higher indicates real improvement.

Before you begin the book, it is essential to read the sample reading selection that follows. Do the sample exercises in each section, and read through the explanation of the answers. In this way, you will become familiar with the organization of the text and its specific requirements.

CONTENTS

Preface	xvii
To the Student	xxi

SAMPLE READING SELECTION

Isaac Asimov

READING, WRITING, AND TECHNOLOGY 1

But in a technological society such as ours—and we boast that the United States is the most technologically advanced society in the world—why are learning and scholarship held in such contempt?

PART 1 GETTING STARTED: PRACTICING THE BASICS 17

1 Bill Adler, Jr., and Peggy Robin HOW NOT TO BE AN OAF AT THE SUPERMARKET 19

Whatever opening line you use, keep it clean. “Do you know if asparagus goes well in a cream sauce?” is fine. References to vegetables, or even fondling vegetables while trying a pickup line, went out with the '70s.

2 Bob Greene HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS 29

When we took her to Hephzibah, we said to her, “You keep that beautiful smile,” Marge Procopio said. “Every time we would see her there, she would have this big smile frozen on her face, as the tears poured down her cheeks. It was as if she

believed that if she smiled as we had asked, then she wouldn't have to be turned over."

3 Solomon Northrup

A SLAVE WITNESS OF A SLAVE AUCTION 37

Next day many customers called to examine Freeman's "new lot." The latter gentleman was very loquacious. He would make us hold up our heads, walk briskly back and forth, while customers would feel of our hands and arms and bodies, turn us about, ask us what we could do, make us open our mouths and show our teeth, precisely as a jockey examines a horse which he is about to barter for or purchase.

4 Mark Twain

SIVILIZING HUCK 47

The widow she cried over me, and called me a poor lost lamb, and she called me a lot of other names, too, but she never meant no harm by it. She put me in them new clothes again, and I couldn't do nothing but sweat and sweat, and feel all cramped up.

5 Rose Del Castillo Guilbault

HISPANIC, USA: THE CONVEYOR-BELT LADIES 55

They spoke with the detached fatalism of people with limited choices and alternatives. Their lives were as raw and brutal as ghetto streets—something they accepted with an odd grace and resignation. I was appalled and deeply affected by these confidences. The injustices they endured enraged me; their personal struggles overwhelmed me. I knew I could do little but sympathize.

6 James Herriot

ALL CREATURES GREAT AND SMALL: TERRY WATSON AND HIS COW 65

Terry's face was grim as he ran his hand along the cow's back. He was in his early twenties, had a wife and a small baby and was one of the breed who was prepared to labour all day for somebody else and then come home and start work on his own few stock. His two cows, his few pigs and hens made a big difference to somebody who had to live on thirty shillings a week.

7 Charles Finney**THE LIFE AND DEATH OF A WESTERN GLADIATOR** 75

Crotalus had not yet arrived for the autumn rendezvous. He came that night. The den's mouth was a shattered mass of rock, for the men had done their dynamiting well. Dead members of his tribe lay everywhere. Crotalus nosed among them, tongue flicking as he slid slowly along.

PART 2**REFINING THE BASICS**

87

8 Paul Chance**KNOCK WOOD** 91

When the survivors of a plane crash are interviewed, some of them inevitably insist that they were saved by prayer. The chances are good that some who did not survive also prayed for all they were worth, but they are now unable to testify about the value of the procedure.

9 Gordon Monson**TALL TALES THAT GROW IN THE URBAN JUNGLE** 101

For the uninitiated, urban legends are apocryphal tales of the unexpected, bizarre or horrible that often—but not always—include a dead or exploding animal (usually something adorable and fluffy, like a cat or bunny rabbit), a microwave oven, a dead human, a naked woman, a surprised repairman, a jilted lover, a hitchhiker or a car.

10 Timothy Harper**BASKETBALL SPOKEN HERE** 113

Though neither the American nor the Chinese could speak a word of each other's language, within minutes they were in a two-on-two game. It was a familiar sequence for the American journalist, who had been getting into pickup basketball games with strangers in gyms and on playgrounds all over the world for 20 years.

11 Ellen Graham

BORN TO SHOP: THE CALL OF THE MALL

123

[Dominic] attempts to explain why shopping, endless shopping, holds such appeal for youngsters his age. "You want to fit in, you want to be in style," he says. His companions nod, and a heated debate about socially correct labels ensues. The consensus is that Reebok high-top sneakers have just been eclipsed by Nikes. Is there any real difference? "Yes," Dominic replies pointedly, "the brand name and the price."

12 Elliott West

WAGON TRAIN CHILDREN

133

The human inhabitants of the land were just as marvelous. Boys and girls who overcame their first fears traded jackknives and coffee for beadwork and moccasins, and in the bargain they got a taste of the exotic. "They amused us by eating grasshoppers," a girl of 12 told her diary. As another young girl puts it, "It was like traveling over the great domains of a lost world."

13 Lynda W. Warren and Jonnae C. Ostrom

THEY'VE GOTTA KEEP IT: PEOPLE WHO SAVE EVERYTHING 145

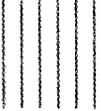
While some pack rats specialize in what they collect, others seem to save indiscriminately. And what they keep, such as junk mail, supermarket receipts, newspapers, business memos, empty cans, clothes or old Christmas and birthday cards, often seem to be worthless. Even when items have some value, such as lumber scraps, fabric remnants, auto parts, shoes and plastic meat trays, they tend to be kept in huge quantities that no one could use in a lifetime.

14 Ron Harris

SEA ISLANDS' SOUTH AFRICA

159

Today, blacks have returned to the new plantations to work as gardeners, waiters and maids, to tend golf courses and tennis courts and to clean private homes. . . . "I know it sounds farfetched, but it's almost like South Africa," said Campbell, 47, over breakfast at one of the island's exclusive hotels. "We need passes to go to places on the island. We work in the lowest jobs so white people can play. We arrive in these buses every morning, and then we're shipped out again."



PART 3

READING ABOUT ISSUES

169

15 Ellen Goodman**U.S. KIDS NEED MORE SCHOOL TIME**

171

The six-hour day, the 180-day school year is regarded as somehow sacrosanct. But when parents work an eight-hour day and a 240-day year, it means something different. It means that many kids go home to empty houses. It means that, in the summer, they hang out.

16 Cathy Trost**WOMEN WHO'VE HAD ABORTIONS**

179

Nearly one-third of pregnancies, excluding miscarriages, in the U.S. end in abortion. The experience cuts across lines of class, race and age. A recent Wall Street Journal/NBC News poll shows that the public, by a 2-to-1 margin, believes that abortion should be legal. But the actual abortion decision remains a deeply personal one, and it is one that many women haven't wanted to discuss publicly.

17 Elizabeth Marek**THE LIVES OF TEENAGE MOTHERS**

193

I feel that the woman should just make up her own mind, make her own decision. But he said, "Oh, I love you, and I'll do this for you, I'll do that for you, and our baby will have this, and our baby will have that." Now she's two and a half years old, and all he ever got her was a big box of Pampers and socks and T-shirts and \$20 and that was it. Suddenly the resentment in her voice changes to wistfulness. "She's two and a half. And he was going to buy her a baby crib and a bassinet and clothes. Everything . . ."

18 Patrick Welsh**SEX AND THE MODERN TEENAGER**

207

Kids seem to agree that the idea of "modern" parents' being so open with their children is a gigantic myth. "The only kind of open discussion that parents want is one that ends with 'Gee, Mom and Dad, you're so right and I'm not sexually active and won't be at least until I get out of high school,'" says one 16-year-old boy.

- 19** John Reid
IF IT'S CUTE ENOUGH, WE'LL SAVE IT 221
- Often, the more human traits an animal appears to have, the stronger its candidacy for stardom. A recent tuna commercial likened a dolphin group to a wholesome American family. Dolphins are seen as loyal, playful geniuses. Owls, of course, are wise. But who sees anything humanlike about such little-known endangered species as the greasy Amazon tapir or the tailed frog?
- 20** George Orwell
A HANGING 231
- It is curious, but till that moment I had never realized what 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.
- 21** Howard Kurtz
IS THE DRUG PLAGUE A RACIST CONSPIRACY? 243
- "It's almost an accepted fact," said Andrew Cooper, publisher of the City Sun, a Brooklyn-based black weekly. "It is a deep-seated suspicion. I believe it. I can't open my desk drawer and say, 'Here it is [the evidence].' But there's just too much money in narcotics. People really believe they are being victimized by The Man. If the government wanted to stop it, it could stop it."

PART 4
TACKLING MORE DIFFICULT PROSE 255

- 22** Jack London
THE STORY OF AN EYEWITNESS 259
- They held on longest to their trunks, and over these trunks many a young man broke his heart that night. The hills of San Francisco are steep, and up these hills, mile after mile, were the trunks dragged. Everywhere were trunks, with across them lying their exhausted owners, men and women.

- 23** Jim Trelease
WHY YOU SHOULD READ TO YOUR KIDS 271
For too many children, reading has become the leisure activity of last resort. They associate reading with ditto sheets, workbooks, homework, test scores. They develop a workbook mentality about reading, which carries on into adulthood.
- 24** David Bodanis
WHAT'S IN TOOTHPASTE 281
Water mostly, 30 to 45 per cent in most brands: ordinary, everyday simple tap water. It's there because people like to have a big gob of toothpaste to spread on the brush, and water is the cheapest stuff there is when it comes to making big gobs. Dripping a bit from the tap onto your brush would cost virtually nothing; whipped in with the rest of the toothpaste the manufacturers can sell it at a neat and accountant-pleasing \$2 per pound equivalent. Toothpaste manufacture is a very lucrative occupation.
- 25** Lawrence W. Sherman
THE DEATH OF EUCLID LESLIE 291
Residents of underclass communities have long suffered high homicide rates, but they could remain fairly safe by choosing their associates wisely. Now, their risk of being murdered is increasingly a matter of being in the wrong place at the wrong time.
- 26** Sy Montgomery
CAN ANIMALS TALK? 301
Rocky begins to search the tank. Her dog-like head swivels, her liquid eyes scan the water's surface. She circles. She even searches under water. No doubt about it: The original small ball is not there. Finally, she appears to reach a decision about Schusterman's odd request: She brings him the smaller of the two balls—the ball that, only minutes before, had been the larger one.
- 27** J. E. Ferrell
WILD DOLPHINS OF MONKEY MIA 313
Welcome to Monkey Mia, the only spot in the world where wild dolphins train humans. The first, and sometimes painful, lesson: Forget the friendly Flipper