


“And when Laur  
ing—no, it must’ve b  
looked in the back seat  
mommy’s talking—all



in the middle of my poem,  
the churchyard, the cloud  
which I contemplated it—



SUSAN DAY  
ELIZABETH McMAHAN

# *The Writer's Resource*

READINGS FOR COMPOSITION

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*Illinois State University*

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## THE WRITER'S RESOURCE

### Readings for Composition

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# PREFACE

This collection of readings is designed to help students improve their writing. While each selection in Part One, *The Writer's Design*, serves a specific rhetorical purpose, the essays are primarily intended as brief and interesting models for analysis. Our main concern has been to choose essays that inspire the students to write. We also believe that an introductory course in composition should include some attention to the deliberate misuse of language. Thus Part Two, *The Writer's Resources*, offers selections exposing the language of deception as well as examples of slanted writing for in-class analysis. The last chapter—Chapter 12, *An Appendix on Using Sources*—briefly covers the skills students need in order to be fair in their own researched writing: summary, paraphrase, integration of sources, documentation, and avoidance of plagiarism.

Since we consider sound organization fundamental to good writing, we have in Part One arranged our selections—essays, short stories, and poems—by pattern of organization. Within each section the difficulty of the essays ranges from simple to challenging. The stories and poems provide further insights into organizational techniques and offer instructive examples of the skillful use of language. These imaginative works should also spark the process of invention and generate ideas for writing. Our purpose in including them is to enrich the teaching of composition.

The discussion questions following each reading—including the stories and poems—focus on rhetorical features. We have arranged the pedagogical apparatus as follows. Preceding selections, there are biographies of the authors and vocabulary words with brief definitions. Following selections, there are various study aids:

*Design and meaning.* Five or six discussion questions emphasizing rhetorical analysis.

*Similarity and difference.* One discussion question asking students to compare or contrast this selection with another in order to analyze style, diction, tone, etc.

*Short writing ideas.* Prewriting suggestions, process work, model imitation, etc.

*Longer writing ideas.* Essay topics for papers of 350 to 500 words.

*Vocabulary check.* Matching, fill-in-the-blanks, sentence-completion, and word-power exercises.

The *Instructor's Manual* which accompanies this text offers practical suggestions for using these materials effectively in the classroom.

We wish to thank the many people who have helped us put this book together. Our editors at McGraw-Hill were Phillip A. Butcher and Susan Gamer. Our reviewers were Bart Benson, West Valley College; William Epperson, Oral Roberts University; Richard Fulani, S.U.N.Y. College at Old Westbury; Rowena Flannagan, Kansas City Community College; Dennis Gabriel, Cuyahoga Community College; Michael Hogan, University of New Mexico; Isabel Kidder, Holyoke Community College; Frank McHugh, Eastern Michigan University; Sharon Niederman, University of Albuquerque; Elizabeth Latosi Sawin, Missouri Western State College; and Ann N. Weisner, New York Institute of Technology. We are, as usual, grateful to our exemplary typist, Pat McCarney. And our debt to our top-notch research assistant, Nadene Coffin, is boundless.

Susan Day  
Elizabeth McMahan

# TO THE STUDENT

We have collected these readings not only because we admire their style and structure, but also because we think you will enjoy them and find them enlightening. A fondness for the language and a sharp eye for technique, both of which we hope to encourage in you, are the very best teachers of writing.

We have included poetry and stories as well as essays; and we sometimes ask you to do what might be called “creative writing.” You may want to know why we want you to ponder a poem or describe a fantasy when the writing you will need to do in the working world consists of ordering parts from the Acme Showcase Company, reporting on water damage from burst pipes, or describing right-of-way specifications. Our theory is that you need to fully realize that words are something you have power over, and any practice directed toward that realization is worthwhile. The ability and ease of expression you develop will apply to anything you have to write. Of course, every writer has times when the words stubbornly have minds of their own, kicking each other in the shins and refusing to stand nicely in line; but the more you think about and practice writing, the shorter these times of clumsiness and disorder will be.

We know many students who feel confident that they can understand an essay but turn into quivering masses of uncertainty when given a poem to read. The uncertainty itself often stands

in the way of comprehension more than the difficulty of the poem does. Keep that in mind; assume an open, relaxed approach to the literary selections; and you will find that you learn from them just as much about rhetoric as you do from a comfortably paragraphed page of prose.

Your work will be made easier by the list of words and definitions at the beginnings of selections. The definitions we give are only the ones which apply to the word in the context of that selection. We have defined words that may be new to you (*interlocutor*, *vacuity*), words that have a different meaning in the selection from the meaning you are probably used to (*exact* used as a verb, for example), and words that at the time they were written carried a different meaning from the meaning you know today (*fancy* meaning "imagination," for instance).

The most difficult work, you will find, is the hard thought we ask you to apply to critically analyzing the selections and practicing your own writing. But we hope you will also find, as you study this book, that the line between work and pleasure grows steadily less distinct.

Susan Day  
Elizabeth McMahan

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