

ARGUING THROUGH LITERATURE



A Thematic
Anthology
and Guide
to Academic
Writing

Judith Ferster

Arguing through Literature: A Thematic Anthology and Guide



JUDITH FERSTER

North Carolina State University



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ARGUING THROUGH LITERATURE: A THEMATIC ANTHOLOGY AND GUIDE

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DEDICATION

*To Paul Ferster, Dorothy Ferster, and David Ferster,
My family of origin—I couldn't have chosen better.*

*And to the teachers and students of the freshman writing program
at North Carolina State University—
The community of choice that inspired this book*

Preface



Arguing through Literature: A Thematic Anthology and Guide to Academic Writing has two goals. First and foremost, it serves as a guide to literature; its apparatus helps students to think, speak, and write knowledgeably about poems, short stories, plays, and essays. Second, it serves as a guide to argument, encouraging students to read and analyze arguments in a number of disciplines and to construct their own arguments about the literature that they read.

More specifically, *Arguing through Literature* uses secondary sources from academic disciplines as “frameworks” to help students analyze, interpret, and write about literature. The core metaphor of frameworks suggests that the way a scene is framed changes the way we see it. The window we look through determines our perspective and so determines what is central and what is peripheral. If we approach a piece of literature through New Criticism, for instance, its concepts help us decide which features of the work are salient, which features “count” as clues to its meaning. Other approaches highlight other features as keys to other kinds of meaning.

Like researchers in other fields, literary critics regularly borrow frameworks from other disciplines in order to look at their subject in new ways. Marxist, Freudian, and feminist “readings” of texts are only a few of the many different schools of literary criticism produced by such borrowings. But instead of giving students examples of those schools of criticism, this book provides them with both primary and secondary sources—literary works and cross-disciplinary writing—they can use to construct their own critiques. Students will work with a variety of disciplinary genres and come to understand how different disciplines accomplish similar tasks in different ways. When, for assignments in the later chapters, they are asked to find their own frameworks, they learn research methods and gain experience doing work that can explore new ground.

This is not a *writing* across the curriculum approach, but rather a *reading* (and thinking) across the curriculum approach. It doesn’t ask a student to produce a sociology paper, but rather it asks a student to look at sociology texts to understand how sociologists communicate, and to consider what a sociological idea might contribute to the understanding of literature. The book thus helps students to prepare for the reading they will do in other courses, in other disciplines, throughout their academic careers.

In sum, working with this book will enable students to:

- **understand** the relationships between literary and nonliterary writing, recognizing the features that they share and the features that they don’t;

- **analyze** arguments, especially academic arguments;
- **generate** sound academic arguments;
- **analyze and interpret** literary works by reading them closely; and
- **analyze and interpret** literary works by contextualizing them using concepts garnered from various academic disciplines.

NOTABLE FEATURES

Arguing through Literature helps instructors and students to achieve these goals with features that include:

- **A wealth of prompts for writing activities**, in class and out, that make any classroom a student-centered environment for active learning and that offer choices and opportunities for professors with individualized teaching goals;
- **Detailed explanation of the elements of language**, like diction and syntax, that provides tools for analyzing texts and writing well;
- **Detailed pedagogy on the features and strategies of argument**, especially academic argument, demystifying the disciplines and revealing further links between analyzing texts and generating ideas for one's own writing;
- **A wide range of engaging selections** by authors both contemporary and classic, from the United States and abroad;
- **A section of full-color reproductions of works of art** to facilitate comparison of visual and verbal modes of representation; and
- **Sample student papers**, some in multiple drafts so that students can watch the revision process.

ORGANIZATION

Arguing through Literature's two major sections are indicated by its subtitle: *A Thematic Anthology and Guide to Academic Writing*. The guide is a three-part section of pedagogical chapters that offer students guidance on reading and writing different kinds of texts, teach them the key elements of literature, and explain argument, research, and the concept of disciplinary frameworks. The guide is followed by the thematically organized anthology of poetry, fiction, drama, and nonfiction prose. In addition, four appendices at the end of the book offer support for the activities prompted in the text.

Parts I, II, and III: The "Guide"

In **Part I: An Introduction to Reading and Writing**, students learn how to identify civic argument, academic argument, and imaginative literature

by recognizing and interpreting key features of each. **Chapter 1: On Reading and Writing** introduces students to the concepts of genre, audience, and the purposes for writing, and **Chapter 2: The Writing Process** provides a step-by-step guide to the writing process, illustrated by a sample student paper. **Chapter 3: Kinds of Writing** develops the definitions of the major genres and shows how the different kinds of writing can speak to each other, introducing the idea of interpretive frameworks.

Part II: The Elements of Literature offers students tools for close reading and encourages them to try them out, providing multiple activities and a diverse set of exemplary texts, using “literature” in the widest sense of the word. Among the examples are poetry by Donne, Frost, and Michael Stipe of the rock group R.E.M.; fiction by Borges; and a medical abstract.

Part III: Argument, Research, and Literature: Conversations among Different Kinds of Writing introduces students to the principles of effective argument and shows them how to use those principles to interpret literature. **Chapter 8: Argument** introduces students to the basic elements of argument: claims, reasons, and assumptions. This chapter draws on the terms set forth in previous chapters to show how the different elements of argument and different kinds of claims appear in arguments from different fields. It examines not only argument, but also the way academic texts situate themselves in relation to previous research in the field, the ways they are structured, and some of their stylistic features.

In **Chapter 9: Exploring Literature through Other Disciplines** and **Chapter 10: Using Research to Write about Literature**, students learn how to use academic arguments as conceptual frameworks for interpreting literature, thus practicing the valuable skill of applying information from one context to material in another, an important goal of intellectual development. As they work through these chapters, they have opportunities to see the way close reading and contextualizing enrich each other and to search for conceptual frameworks on their own.

Part IV: The “Thematic Anthology”

Part IV: A Thematic Anthology presents literature and disciplinary arguments arranged into eight thematic groupings. Many of the selections and some of the themes are favorites of teachers and students, but some of the works are less frequently anthologized. In addition, some of the favorites appear under uncommon headings to encourage fresh views of them.

The thematic anthology and the prompts for writing and discussion were developed to provide instructors with enough flexibility to adapt learning to individual goals. Each genre of literature, including nonfiction prose, is represented in each thematic chapter, and the selections range from classic to contemporary. For example, **Chapter 11: Body** has poems from Emily Dickinson, John Donne, and William Shakespeare but also from newer poets Lucille Clifton, Galway Kinnell, and Sharon Olds. Nonfiction prose writers include a pharmacologist, an academic writing civic discourse, and a memoir writer.

The Appendices

Four helpful appendices round out the text. **Appendix A: Critical Approaches** gives students an overview of the important schools of criticism. **Appendix B: Glossary of Terms** provides students with definitions of important literary and rhetorical terms. **Appendix C: Reading Non-literary Texts** gives students guidance for comprehending and responding to nonfiction prose. **Appendix D** offers a guide to MLA and APA documentation styles.

SUPPLEMENTARY RESOURCES

Arguing through Literature provides a host of supplemental resources for instructors and students.

- The Instructor's Resource CD-ROM contains potential responses to class activities and suggestions for teaching.
- The Online Learning Center, located at www.mhhe.com/ferster, has a student side that includes casebooks for featured authors and portions of the texts connected to the sample student papers in Chapters 8 and 10. It also has a chart outlining a brief history of the English language and an exercise helping students to distinguish between civic and academic discourse. For easy reference, OLC icons appear in the margin next to authors included in the Online Learning Center author casebooks. The instructor side includes the instructor's manual.
- ARIEL (A Resource for the Interactive Exploration of Literature), McGraw-Hill English's fully interactive CD-ROM, is an exciting new tool that introduces students to the pleasures of studying literature. The CD features nearly thirty casebooks on authors ranging from Sophocles to Rita Dove. Each casebook offers a rich array of resources, including hyperlinked texts, video and audio clips, critical essays, a biography, bibliography, and webliography, essay questions, quizzes, and visuals. To make the text-CD connections as seamless as possible, ARIEL icons appear in the margins next to authors featured in ARIEL. Among numerous other resources are a robust glossary and a visual timeline.

Acknowledgments



The idea for this book came out of the goals set for the first-year writing program of North Carolina State University when I was the director of the program. The teachers of the program, including graduate teaching assistants who had responsibility for their own sections, responded to those goals with great ingenuity and imagination. Many talked with me about teaching, used drafts of chapters of this book in classes, let me observe classes, and shared their students' writing. Some of them helped with the study questions for selections in the anthology. In addition, several graduate students served as research assistants. Other members of the English Department faculty responded generously to my requests for help with ideas and selections for the anthology. Several are rhetoricians who, along with writing teachers, served on the advisory council of the program and taught me more than I knew about teaching writing. Several members of the administrative staff introduced me to new genres of popular music. They all helped me learn a great deal while trying to make this book grow and certainly helped me have fun doing it. They include: Prof. Chris Anson, Ms. Evelyn Audi, David Baker, Prof. John Balaban, David L. P. Carter, Prof. Michael P. Carter, Prof. Christopher Cobb, Alyssa Fountain, Dr. Meredith Fosque, Prof. Charlotte Gross, Mr. Phil Lisi, Ms. Rachel Lutwick-Deaner, Amy Sue Martin, Justin Marks, Prof. David Herman, Mr. Larry Johnson, Prof. John Kessel, Prof. Antony Harrison, Prof. Deborah Hooker, Prof. Steven B. Katz, Dr. Cathy Leaker, Mr. Steven Luyendyk, Mr. Eugene Melton, Dr. Kevin McGowin, Prof. Carolyn Miller, Twila Mills, Veronica Norris, Prof. Nancy Penrose, Prof. Joyce Pettis, Mr. Matt Porter, Ms. Laura Prewitt, Prof. Kirsten Shepherd-Barr, Prof. Judy Jo Small (Emerita), Mr. Roy Stamper, Prof. Jon Thompson, Dr. Anjel Tozcu, Mr. Tom Wallis, Prof. Walt Wolfram, and Prof. Robert Young.

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My parents Paul Ferster and Dorothy Ferster provided remarkable material support so that my house wouldn't fall apart while I was absorbed in writing. They also brought the research, editorial, and production skills they had developed while working on their own publications into the late drafts, especially of the anthology. The usual "sine qua non" is more than usually true in the case of their extraordinary gifts to this project. They didn't have to.

Lisa Moore of McGraw-Hill memorably helped me translate pedagogy into written form in the earliest drafts. McGraw-Hill editors Sarah Touborg, Alexis Walker, and Bennett Morrison attended to form and content at every level of the project and helped to keep me on track, as well. Katharine Glynn helped give the anthology substance and shape.

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All of the people listed here have been my teachers. I hope my responses to their comments and suggestions are worthy of their patience and generosity, for which I am deeply grateful.

The following pages illustrate how this book works. Spending a few minutes getting to know the features of *Arguing through Literature* will help you get the most out of the text.

► Examples of **student writing** throughout the first three parts show you how other students accomplished the writing tasks that you will face in this course.

Digging

SEAMUS HEANEY (1939–), born in Castledawson, County Derry, Northern Ireland, won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1995.

Whoa! Is he angry at someone?
I thought the pen was resting.
How did it turn into a weapon?

Not a very dignified position. Is
this supposed to be funny?

What's a potato drill? The
dictionary has a "drill"
meaning a trench or furrow for
planting seeds—that must be it.
Not an instrument for boring
holes in the German cotton or
the W. African balloon.

¹Of course, this advice pertains only if you have "writing rights" over a text. If you need to be actively engaged with something from a library, photocopy it so that you can respond fully without intruding on the experience of later readers.

Between my finger and my thumb
The squall pen rests: snug as a gun.

Under my window, a clean rasping sound
When the spade sinks into gravelly ground.
My father, digging. I look down

Till his straining rump among the flowerbeds
Bends low, comes up twenty years away
Stooping in rhythm through potato drills
Where he was digging.

Clearly, there are significant differences between Belluck's account for the readers of the *New York Times* and Snowdon's scientific article. The activity below will help you articulate them.

ACTIVITY 5: Comparing Belluck and Snowdon

What differences do you see between Belluck's article for the *New York Times* and the abstract of the scientists' report for the New York Academy of Sciences?

- Compare the length of the abstract's single paragraph with the length of the paragraphs of the *New York Times*.
- What kinds of vocabulary does each piece use? How many words in each of them are you unfamiliar with?
- Who is speaking in each piece?
- What other differences between the two pieces do you see? How do you account for them?

► **Activity prompts** throughout the first three parts give you the opportunity to write in response to literature using the skills presented in the text.

Checklist for Improving Drafts

- Does the draft fulfill the assignment? Does it accomplish goals that the major verbs of the assignment call for?
- What is the thesis? How can it be made clearer?
- Does the introduction predict what happens in the draft without stealing its own thunder?
- Does the conclusion recapitulate without being boring?
- How does the conclusion offer something new without going off on an irrelevant tangent?
- Does the draft divide its material into appropriate categories and subcategories?
- Does it put them in a logical order with appropriate transitions between them?
- Does the draft offer enough relevant evidence to support its thesis? What further evidence could be added? What contradictory evidence does it ignore?
- Does it use references, paraphrases, and quotations to gather evidence?
- How could its style be improved?
- How can its grammar and mechanical errors be corrected?

► **Checklists**, located throughout Part I, ask you questions that will help you review important principles.

► **Part IV: A Thematic Anthology** presents literature and academic writing arranged into eight thematic chapters: Body; Spirit; Acting and Authenticity; Gender, Sex, and Love; Race and Ethnicity; Ethical Questions; Nature; and Sight and Insight.

1. What is the structure of the poem? The important features of its language?
 2. Who is speaking? To whom? What is narrator's argument to the poem?
 What argumentative tactics does the narrator use to try to get his way?
 Compare it to the argument in "To His Coy Mistress" (see Chapter 13).
 What other poems in this section can this poem be compared to?
 3. What disciplines could shed light on this poem?

FRAMEWORKS

Looking at Shakespeare through Medicine

SHAKESPEARE, Sonnets 65, 72, 73
 HOBART WALLING, "Life's Brief Candle: A Shakespearean Guide to Death and Dying for Compassionate Physicians"

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (1564–1616) was born at Stratford-on-Avon to a middle-class family. Many of the theories that someone else wrote his plays are motivated by the fact that little is known about his education. He seems to have been educated at the free grammar school in Stratford and to have been, possibly, a schoolmaster there, but there is no record of any time at a university. Some find it hard to explain how a person without university training could have had as much knowledge about the natural world, the arts and sciences, the practical arts, and classical literature as is revealed in the works. But the plays and poems show not only learning, but also a keen ear for language, great wit, and deep insight into the complexities of human character. Shakespeare invented words and developed the genre of Renaissance tragedy and the blank verse line in agile and inventive ways. After marrying Anne Hathaway, and possibly having a pair of twins named Hamnet and Judith, he moved to London, where he became an actor in a very successful acting company and a shareholder in the Swan Theatre. There he wrote, produced, and acted in a stream of plays that are cherished around the world and have been given continuously in every possible medium. When he died in Stratford, he bequeathed his second-best bed to his wife. To the world, he bequeathed poems, including the "Sonnet," "Venus and Adonis," and "The Rape of Lucrece" and a time of comedies, tragedies, and histories that have influenced writers all over the world.

Shakespeare, Sonnets 65, 72, 73

A number of Renaissance poets produced sequences of sonnets, including Sir Philip Sidney ("Astrophel and Stella"), Edmund Spenser ("Amoretti"), and Shakespeare, whose 154 sonnets consider themes of love, life, death, and art.

► A selection of **full-color reproductions** of works of art let you compare visual representations to the written representations elsewhere in the text.

❧❧❧

JOHN DONNE

(For biographical notes, see p. 256.)

Song

Go, and catch a falling star,
 Get with child^a a mandrake root,^b
 Tell me, where all past years are,
 Or who cleft the devil's foot,
 Teach me to hear mermaids singing
 Or to keep off envy's stinging,
 And find
 What wind
 Serves to advance an honest mind.

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► Each thematic chapter in the anthology has a **Frameworks** section that offers a literary selection paired with relevant academic writing that you can use to interpret the literary selection.

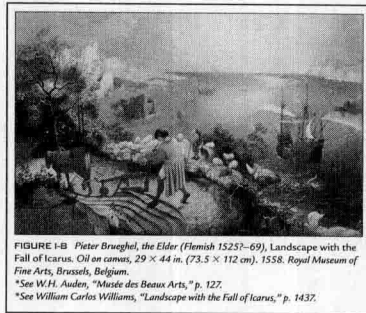


FIGURE 14B Pieter Bruegel, the Elder (Flemish 1525?–69), *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*. Oil on canvas, 29 × 44 in. (73.5 × 112 cm), 1558. Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Brussels, Belgium.
^aSee W.H. Auden, "Musée des Beaux Arts," p. 127.
^bSee William Carlos Williams, "Landscape with the Fall of Icarus," p. 1437.

► **ARIEL icons** in the margin of the book indicate authors about whom you will find additional resources in the ARIEL CD-ROM that accompanies the text.

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