

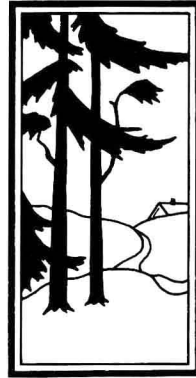
LITERATURE

Options for Reading and Writing

Second Edition



Donald A. Daiker • Mary Fuller • Jack E. Wallace



SECOND EDITION

LITERATURE

OPTIONS FOR READING AND WRITING

Donald A. Daiker

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Miami University of Ohio

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much of the material in this book.

PREFACE

In this second edition of *Literature: Options for Reading and Writing*, we have made several changes which provide greater variety and richness in both reading and writing assignments. Additions to the reading selections include Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Tom Stoppard's *The Real Thing*, and a series of stories: new tales by the nineteenth-century masters Edgar Allan Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne; new science fiction by Ray Bradbury and Ursula K. Le Guin; and, most prominently, new contemporary stories by Ann Beattie, Raymond Carver, Gail Godwin, and David Quammen. The poetry unit has been changed in several ways. We have added poems by Margaret Atwood, Gwendolyn Brooks, Emily Dickinson, Mona Van Duyn, W.S. Merwin, Lorraine Karafel, Erica Jong, Sylvia Plath, Robert Penn Warren, and David Wagoner. The new poems offer greater breadth and depth to the poetry unit. For instance, Erica Jong's "On the First Night," David Wagoner's "The Best Slow Dancer," and Mona Van Duyn's "Late Loving" are more upbeat than many of the current selections, providing balance for Gwendolyn Brook's "The Mother," which grimly recounts a mother's message to her aborted children, and Lorraine Karafel's "Heroines," which tells of Medea and Judith's murderous sacrifices. By adding additional poems by David Wagoner and Emily Dickinson, we provide poem "clusters," which allow teachers to assign four or five poems from one writer to show that artist's growth over a period of time. Additions to the writing assignments include prereading topics as well as a series of questions based on actual passages from student writing. These additions better enable us to attain our original aim: to provide a text for instructors who are as strongly committed to the teaching of writing as to the teaching of literature.

This book originated in our attempt to answer objections to conventional courses in literature and composition. The most common objection is that literature has a way of overwhelming composition; instructors typically schedule five or six reading assignments for every one writing assignment and spend five or six class periods interpreting literature for every one class period examining student writing. As a result, students are often made to feel that what they write is not as important as what they read. We wanted, therefore, to design a course

that reasserted the importance of writing and that encouraged students to see their writing as a means of discovery: discovery about their own tastes and values, discovery about the meaning of a particular story or poem, discovery about the nature of literary experience.

With support from the National Endowment for the Humanities, we constructed a course that demonstrated that the process of writing and the process of interpreting literature can become mutually reinforcing activities. One basic strategy in this course was to design a number of brief writing assignments for every reading assignment. Sample student papers about each work were typically shared with the class, either by having them read aloud or, more often, duplicated and distributed. These samples not only provided revision practice and initiated class discussion but in many cases became partial drafts for longer papers. Because of our increased emphasis on student writing and revision, we assigned fewer literary works (for example, one story a week instead of one story per class meeting) and we selected works that were readily accessible—on at least one important level of meaning—to college freshmen.

This course was class-tested at Miami University during the 1982 Spring semester. It was tested in 22 sections of freshman English taught by 15 different instructors and involving 550 students. The testing was conducted by Donald J. Gray, a former director of composition and department chair at Indiana University and then editor of *College English*. On the basis of his extensive evaluation, Gray wrote in his final report to the National Endowment for the Humanities that the integrated course had been “markedly successful” both in improving students’ writing and in increasing students’ literary understanding. According to Gray, “faculty members thought that they had never before been so successful in connecting the teaching of literature to the teaching of writing, and that they had never before taught literature or writing so effectively.” Gray concluded that the course had successfully demonstrated that the study of literature is not only compatible with the study of writing but that, properly integrated, the two activities are mutually sustaining and reinforcing. Since then we have continued to construct and test different kinds of writing assignments and to adapt them to a wide range of literary works. This book is the product of both the NEH course and our subsequent work.

The main feature of this text, the feature that distinguishes it from others of its kind, is the number and diversity of writing assignments. While the second edition retains many of these assignments, we have made certain improvements based on our own experience in the classroom and the council of colleagues who have used this text in other schools. In the first edition we followed the usual practice of putting the writing assignments after a particular reading. In the second edition we additionally provide prereading topics that ask students to write about issues and situations that they will encounter in their reading. Before reading Marvell’s “To His Coy Mistress,” for example, students are asked to explore their views on sexual freedom, and before reading Miller’s *Death of a Salesman*, they are asked to discuss the meaning of success in America. These papers will help students to see how different beliefs and attitudes might influence their reading of a text. After reading a story or poem students are

provided a choice of prewriting activities—free writing, looping, listing, and brainstorming—which help them in the discovery process.

Several sorts of more formal exercises provide steady practice in all phases of critical activity. Although we no longer classify writing assignments as explanation, argument, and personal response, there are for each reading a number of topics that stress each of these rhetorical patterns. Some topics are primarily explanatory—asking students to recognize, select, and organize evidence in a particular work. These assignments provide practice in familiar strategies for development—especially illustration, comparison and contrast, and cause and effect. One aim of these assignments is to establish in the class some basic agreement about “what happens” in a story or poem. But students, in giving what they assume to be a factual account of what happens, are likely to reveal their tastes and values in ways that indicate at least a preliminary interpretation of the work.

Another type of assignment provides practice in the strategies of argument, asking students to defend an interpretation against another one of equal or nearly equal validity. In order to do this, students must learn to recognize and anticipate objections to their argument—a valuable exercise in improving both their persuasive writing and their literary understanding. A third kind of assignment asks students to show how their personal response to a particular character or event affects their perception and evaluation of a work. While these assignments seem to encourage the “affective fallacy,” students who begin by asking, “How does this affect me?” usually discover the need to generalize their personal experience and to assume that they do not speak simply for themselves but for typical readers. The students’ concern about the role of the reader is also reinforced when they share their personal responses with other members of the class.

Additional writing practice is provided by sentence-combining exercises which vary in both length and function. One such exercise is designed to help students understand and use important critical terms such as irony, symbol, setting, point of view, rhythm, and metaphor. Another kind asks students to select from a group of sentences only those most relevant to their purpose and then to organize them into an effective whole.

Together, the prewriting activities and the short paper assignments provide a learn-as-you-write introduction to literary method and practice. More importantly, they provide the foundation for full-length compositions and thus encourage students to view their writing as a coherent sequence of writing tasks. Because we have found that student essays about literature are more effective when they grow out of the class’s unmediated response and discussion, we have not interposed expert opinion on “How to Write about Literature” or prescriptive definitions of such literary terms as plot, setting, theme, irony, and the like. Students come to a better understanding of these terms by discovering how their own writing must inevitably take them into account.

In creating *Literature: Options for Reading and Writing* we have had invaluable help. We owe special thanks to our colleague Frank Jordan, Jr., who was one of the co-directors of the NEH grant that enabled us to develop and test

a series of literature-based composition assignments. We have dedicated this book to Frank and to twelve other colleagues who class-tested our approach and our materials in their freshman English courses: Marc Britt, Dick Donnell, Roland Duerksen, Alice Fannin, Alice Fox, Bob Johnson, Rob Kettler, Becky Lukens, Allison McCormack, Jerry Rosenberg, Gil Storms, and Randolph Wadsworth. We are deeply grateful as well to our NEH consultant and evaluator Donald J. Gray. Don worked with characteristic intelligence, insight, and diligence in helping us to design and then to evaluate the project.

For their perceptive comments on our manuscript, we are indebted to ten skilled and sensitive readers: Harold Ackerman of Bloomsburg University; John Clifford of the University of North Carolina at Wilmington; Millicent Garcia of Creighton University; Donald J. Gray of Indiana University; Jim Holte of East Carolina University; Richard L. Larson of Herbert H. Lehman College of the City University of New York; Elizabeth McPherson, formerly of Forest Park Community College; Jack Selzer of The Pennsylvania State University; William L. Stull of the University of Hartford; and Robert E. Yarber of San Diego Mesa Community College. We also thank these additional reviewers: Glenn Reed of Northern Arizona University; Jeannette Bouchard of Northeastern University; D'Ann Madewell of North Lake College; Brian Best of Brigham Young University; and Ronald Trowse of College of San Mateo. We thank Jim Flavin and Karl Schnapp for expertly managing permissions. Betty Marak is still the best typist we know. Finally, we are grateful to our editors at Harper & Row for encouraging us to develop a book that integrates composition and literature, and for supporting us throughout with their generosity and wisdom.

Donald A. Daiker

Mary Fuller

Jack E. Wallace

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PART ONE

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