

FOURTH EDITION

THE COMPACT BEDFORD  
INTRODUCTION TO  
*Literature*

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*Reading • Thinking • Writing*



MICHAEL MEYER

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# The Compact Bedford INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE

Reading, Thinking, and Writing

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BOSTON

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*Cover Design:* Hannus Design Associates

*Cover Art:* *Couch on the Porch, Cos Cob*, 1914, by Childe Hassam. Private collection. Photograph courtesy of Sotheby's.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 96-85012

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1 0 9 8 7 6  
f e d c b a

*For information, write:* Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press  
75 Arlington Street, Boston, MA 02116 (617-426-7440)

ISBN: 0-312-13263-8

## Acknowledgments

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**The Compact Bedford  
INTRODUCTION TO  
LITERATURE**

**Reading, Thinking, and Writing**

**For My Wife**  
**Regina Barreca**

## About Michael Meyer

Michael Meyer has taught introductory writing and literature courses for more than twenty years — since 1981 at the University of Connecticut and before that at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte and the College of William and Mary.

In addition to being an experienced teacher, Meyer is a highly regarded literary scholar. His scholarly articles have appeared in distinguished journals such as *American Literature*, *Studies in the American Renaissance*, and *Virginia Quarterly Review*. An internationally recognized authority on Henry David Thoreau, Meyer is a former president of the Thoreau Society and the coauthor (with Walter Harding) of *The New Thoreau Handbook*, a standard reference source. His first book, *Several More Lives to Live: Thoreau's Political Reputation in America*, was awarded the Ralph Henry Gabriel Prize by the American Studies Association. He is also the editor of *Frederick Douglass: The Narrative and Selected Writings* and the author of *The Little, Brown Guide to Writing Research Papers*, Third Edition. Meyer is currently preparing an edition of *Walden* for Bedford Books's *Case Studies in Contemporary Criticism* series. His other books for Bedford include *The Bedford Introduction to Literature*, Fourth Edition; *Poetry: An Introduction*; and *Thinking and Writing about Literature*.

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# Preface for Instructors

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Designed for instructors who want the distinctive features of the *The Bedford Introduction to Literature*, Fourth Edition, but who don't require the extensive range of selections in that volume, *The Compact Bedford Introduction to Literature*, Fourth Edition, offers a briefer and more economical alternative while still providing an abundantly rich collection of stories, poems, and plays. Like its longer companion and that book's predecessors, *The Compact Bedford Introduction to Literature* reflects the assumptions that understanding enhances the enjoyment of literature and that reading literature offers a valuable and unique means of apprehending life in its richness and diversity. The book also reflects the hope that the selections included will encourage students to become lifelong readers of imaginative literature. Designed to accommodate a variety of teaching styles, the collection of 45 stories (14 of them new to the fourth edition), 333 poems (82 of them new), and 14 plays (4 of them new) represents a wide range of periods, nationalities, and voices. Each selection has been carefully chosen for its appeal to students today and for its usefulness in demonstrating the effects, significance, and pleasures of literature.

Again, like its longer companion, the fourth edition of *The Compact Bedford Introduction to Literature* is designed for the introductory course as it is taught today, which varies — from school to school and from instructor to instructor — more than ever before. Even the traditional course emphasizing the elements of literature and a broad range of works from the Western canon is changing in response to important developments in literary studies and, more generally, in higher education and in American society. The course is now viewed by many teachers as a rich opportunity to supplement classics of Western literature with the work of writers previously excluded from the traditional canon. Increasingly, it now also serves as an introduction to the discipline of literary study, a challenging development that brings to the undergraduate classroom important trends in literary theory and provocative new readings of both familiar and unfamiliar texts. Finally, and perhaps most often, the introduction to literature course is now also taught as a second

course in composition in which the critical thinking and writing that students do are as important as the reading that they do. The fourth edition of *The Compact Bedford Introduction to Literature* responds to these developments with distinctive features that address the needs of instructors who teach a traditional course but who are also concerned about canonical issues, literary theory, and writing about literature.

## **Writing about Literature**

The book's concern with helping students write about literature is pervasive. The fourth edition of *The Compact Bedford Introduction to Literature* is especially suited for courses in which writing in response to literature is a central component. Five chapters cover every step of the writing process — from generating topics to documenting sources — and offer advice on different kinds of writing assignments. Two extensive chapters — “Reading and Writing” and “The Literary Research Paper” — discuss and illustrate the writing process while offering models of the different types of papers usually assigned in an introductory course, including explication, analysis, and comparison-contrast. A detailed chapter on the literary research paper, with a student model (documented in the MLA style), provides the necessary information for finding, evaluating, and documenting sources.

In addition, three new chapters — “Writing about Fiction,” “Writing about Poetry,” and “Writing about Drama” — focus on genre-specific writing assignments, each with questions for responsive reading and writing along with sample student papers. Also integrated throughout the book are three new “Questions for Writing” units, one on incorporating outside sources, one on writing about an author covered in depth, and one on applying a critical strategy to a work. Each of these units is illustrated by a sample paper. The book includes a total of twelve sample papers (increased from four in the third edition) that provide concrete, accessible models for a wide range of assignments. Finally, a new quick-reference chart of all the writing-about-literature features is provided on the front endpapers of the book to help students (and instructors) find the writing advice they need. In sum, this new and expanded coverage offers a comprehensive overview of writing about literature; indeed, this material is strong enough to have been separately published as *Thinking and Writing about Literature* (1995).

## **Focus on Critical Reading and Thinking**

To encourage the critical reading and thinking that are an integral part of the writing process, advice on how to read imaginative literature appears at the beginning of each genre section. It offers practical advice about the kinds of questions active readers ask themselves as they read. To provoke students' interest, sharpen their thinking, and help them improve their discussion and writing skills, the number and variety of questions related to the readings have been increased in the fourth edition. In addition to the more than fifteen hundred questions that comprise the “Considerations for Critical Thinking and Writing” and “Connections to Other Selections” (questions and suggestions useful for class discussion or writing assignments), the chapter

entitled “Reading and Writing” describes how to read a work closely, annotate a text, take notes, keep a reading journal, and develop a topic into a thesis. This chapter also includes a section on arguing about literature that discusses how to generate arguments on literary topics and make those arguments persuasive. A list of questions based on the critical approaches covered in the chapter “Critical Strategies for Reading” helps students to discover the significant issues regarding a short story, poem, or play that may be arguable. In addition, an annotated list of important reference sources for literary research is provided.

### **Selected Major Authors Treated in Depth**

Selected major authors in each genre are treated in depth. There are three stories each by Nathaniel Hawthorne, Flannery O'Connor, and Alice Munro (new to this edition); an extensive selection of poems by Emily Dickinson, Robert Frost, and Langston Hughes (new to this edition); and two plays by Shakespeare. Substantial introductions provide useful biographical and critical information about each of these important writers. A selection of “Perspectives” — excerpts from letters, journals, and critical commentaries — follows each writer's works to provide a context for discussion and writing. In addition, “Considerations for Critical Thinking and Writing” follow both selections and “Perspectives”; these questions for discussion or writing encourage critical thinking and provide stimulating opportunities for student essays.

“Two Complementary Critical Readings” of a particular work are included for each author treated in depth. These critical readings offer students examples of the variety of approaches they can take in reading and writing about literature. The two readings on Hawthorne, for instance, focus on feminist and psychological approaches to “The Birthmark.” By reading commentaries by two critics who argue competing ideas about one text or who illuminate different aspects of that text, students can see immediately that there is no single way to read a work of literature, an important and necessary step for learning how to formulate their own critical approaches in their essays.

### **Albums of Contemporary and World Literature**

In the sections on fiction and poetry, an album of contemporary selections offers some of the most interesting and lively stories and poems published in the recent past, including works by Sandra Cisneros, Tim O'Brien, Charles Johnson, Judith Ortiz Cofer, Robert Hass, Galway Kinnell, and Sharon Olds. Biographical information about the album authors is included in the text in order to introduce instructors and students to these important but, perhaps, unfamiliar writers.

In addition, albums of world literature in the sections on fiction and poetry offer students a sampling of stories and poems from other cultures, including the work of Isabel Allende (Chilean), Bessie Head (Botswana), Naguib Mahfouz (Egyptian), Claribel Alegria (Salvadoran), Octavio Paz (Mex-

linked by “Connections to Other Selections” questions are read together to offer an added resource for class discussion. In addition, the tape features the work of poets treated in depth (Dickinson, Frost, and Hughes); poems that serve as good examples of the elements of poetry discussed in the book; and, finally, a rich selection of classic and contemporary poems.

## Acknowledgments

This book has benefited from the ideas, suggestions, and corrections of scores of careful readers who helped transform various stages of an evolving manuscript into a finished book and into subsequent editions. I remain grateful to those I have thanked in previous prefaces, particularly Robert Wallace of Case Western Reserve University. In addition, many instructors who used either the long or compact versions of the third edition of *The Bedford Introduction to Literature* responded to a questionnaire on the book. For their valuable comments and advice I am grateful to Howard C. Adams, Frostburg State University; Sandra Adickes, Winona State University; Jan Agard, Muskegon Community College; Alan Ainsworth, Houston Community College; Helen J. Aling, Northwestern College; Susan Allen, Frostburg State University; J. Allen-Leventhal, Westminster College of Salt Lake; Mary Baron, University of North Florida; Harvey Birenbaum, San Jose State University; Sister Anne Denise Brennan, College of Mount Saint Vincent; Stephen C. Brennan, Louisiana State University — Shreveport; Frederick M. Burelbach, SUNY Brockport; Mary Ellen Byrne, Ocean County Community College; Marilyn A. Carlson, Augustana College; Shireen Carroll, Davidson College; Dr. W. John Coletta, University of Wisconsin — Stevens Point; Thomas F. Connolly, Suffolk University; Michael K. Crockett, Eastern Arizona College; Robert Croft, Gainesville College; Nancy Dayton, Taylor University; Cynthia Dominik, Indiana University; Olivia Carr Edenfield, Georgia Southern University; Barbara Edwards, Westbrook College; Thomas S. Edwards, Westbrook College; Marilyn D. Fillers, Cleveland State Community College; Tanya J. Gardiner-Scott, Mount Ida College; Kelly Garneau, Northeastern University; Bruce Gatenby, Idaho State University; Marshall Bruce Gentry, University of Indianapolis; Donald S. Gochberg, Michigan State University; R. C. Goetter, Gloucester County College; Kathryn A. Goodfellow, Northeastern University; Ervene Gulley, Bloomsburg University; Janet Ruth Heller, Grand Valley State University; Dr. Don Hubele, Malone College; Nancy Hynes, College of Saint Benedict; Mickey Jackson, Golden West College; William R. Kanouse, Ocean Community College; Les Keyser, College of Staten Island; Carolyn T. Kipnis, Montgomery County Community College; Jeanne Phoenix Laurel, Niagara University; William Lawlor, University of Wisconsin — Stevens Point; G. T. Lenard, Stockton College; Stephen J. Leone, Rockland Community College; Linda Lincoln, University of Minnesota; Olga Lyles, University of Nevada — Las Vegas; Mark Lytal, Columbus College; Carmen Manning, Colorado State University; Richard Marciniak, Cathage College; William Marquess, Saint Michael's College; Miles S. McCrimmon, J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College; John J. McKenna, University of Nebraska — Omaha; Darla W. McPherson, Northampton County Area Com-

munity College; Joseph Mills, University of California — Davis; Tracy Mishkin, Georgia College; Rosa Martha Mizerski, West Valley College; Jennifer Mongeon, University of Denver; Robert T. Mundhenk, Northampton Community College; Elizabeth W. O'Brien, Drew University; Stephen J. Overall, Santa Monica College; Thomas Palakeel, Bradley University; Timothy Peters, Boston University; Brendan Pieters, Sante Fe Community College; Francine Poppo, Bergen Community College; Peggy Poteet, Southern Nazarene University; John Pratt, Cosumnes River College; Jolene Prewit-Parker, Blue Ridge Community College; Barbara C. Rhodes, Mohawk Valley Community College; Dr. David Rife, Lycoming College; Carl Rollysun, Baruch College; Liz Rosner, Contra Costa College; Deborah L. Ross, Hawaii Pacific University; Peter Rudy, University of Iowa; Lillian Ruiz-Powell, Greenfield Community College; Catherine Rusco, Muskegon Community College; Constance M. Ruzich, Malone College; Pauline M. Spatafora, La Guardia College; Robert M. St. John, DePaul University; Jamie Stanesa, Iowa State University; Lisa S. Starks, East Texas State University; Richard Stoner, Broome Community College; Stanley Tick, San Francisco State University; Susan Hamilton Trudell, Scott Community College; Martha Turner, San Jose State University; Nancy Veiga, Modesto Junior College; Karla Walters, University of New Mexico; Winifred S. Wasden, Northwest College; Diana Webb, Savannah Technical Institute; Judy Wilkinson, Skyline College; John R. Williamson, Prestonsburg Community College; Charmayne Wilson, Del Mar College; and Ningping Yu, University of Iowa.

I would also like to give special thanks to the following instructors who contributed teaching tips to the fourth edition of *Resources for Teaching THE COMPACT BEDFORD INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE*: Sandra Adickes, Winona State University; Helen J. Aling, Northwestern College; Sr. Anne Denise Brennan, College of Mt. St. Vincent; Robin Calitri, Merced College; James H. Clemmer, Austin Peay State University; Robert Croft, Gainesville College; Thomas Edwards, Westbrook College; Olga Lyles, University of Nevada; Timothy Peters, Boston University; Catherine Rusco, Muskegon Community College; Robert M. St. John, De Paul University; Richard Stoner, Broome Community College; Nancy Veiga, Modesto Junior College; Karla Walters, University of New Mexico; and Joseph Zeppetello, Ulster Community College.

I am also indebted to those who cheerfully answered questions and generously provided miscellaneous bits of information. What might have seemed to them like inconsequential conversations turned out to be important leads. Among these friends and colleagues are Raymond Anselment, Ann Charters, John Christie, Irving Cummings, William Curtin, Patrick Hogan, Lee Jacobus, Bonnie Januszewski-Ytuarte, Greta Little, George Monteiro, Brenda Murphy, Joel Myerson, Thomas Recchio, William Sheidley, Stephanie Smith, Milton Stern, Kenneth Wilson, and the dedicated reference librarians at the Homer Babbidge Library, University of Connecticut.

I continue to be grateful for what I have learned from teaching my students and for the many student papers I have received over the years that I have used in various forms to serve as good and accessible models of student writing. I am also indebted to Kathleen Drowne, Laura J. Apol, and

Anne Phillips for their extensive work on the fourth edition of *Resources for Teaching THE COMPACT BEDFORD INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE*.

At Bedford Books, my debts once again require more time to acknowledge than the deadline allows. Charles H. Christensen and Joan Feinberg initiated this project and launched it with their intelligence, energy, and sound advice. Karen Henry tirelessly steered earlier editions through rough as well as becalmed moments; her work was as first-rate as it was essential. Kathy Retan's clear-headedness, perseverance, and insights helped to make the fourth edition better in every way. Joanne Diaz oversaw the revision of *Resources for Teaching THE COMPACT BEDFORD INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE* with remarkable patience and efficiency in the face of tight deadlines, as well as assisting with numerous other details. The difficult tasks of production were skillfully managed by John Amburg, whose attention to details and deadlines was essential to the completion of this project. He was ably assisted by Maureen Murray, who also deftly arranged the permissions, and Stasia Zomkowski. Jane Zanichkowsky provided careful copyediting. Numerous other people at Bedford Books — including Donna Lee Dennison, Ellen Kuhl, Susan Pace, and Miranda Pinckert — helped to make this enormous project a manageable one.

Finally, I am grateful to my sons Timothy and Matthew for all kinds of help, but mostly I'm just grateful they're my sons. And always for making all the difference, I dedicate this book to my wife, Regina Barreca.

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# Resources for Writing about Literature

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More than ever, *The Compact Bedford Introduction to Literature*, in its fourth edition, is especially suited for courses in which writing in response to literature is a central component. In addition to extensive questions and writing assignments that offer over 1,500 specific occasions for writing, this book provides:

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## FICTION

### Chapter 1. Reading Fiction

*A Sample Paper: Differences in Responses to Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour"*

### Chapter 9. Writing about Fiction

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