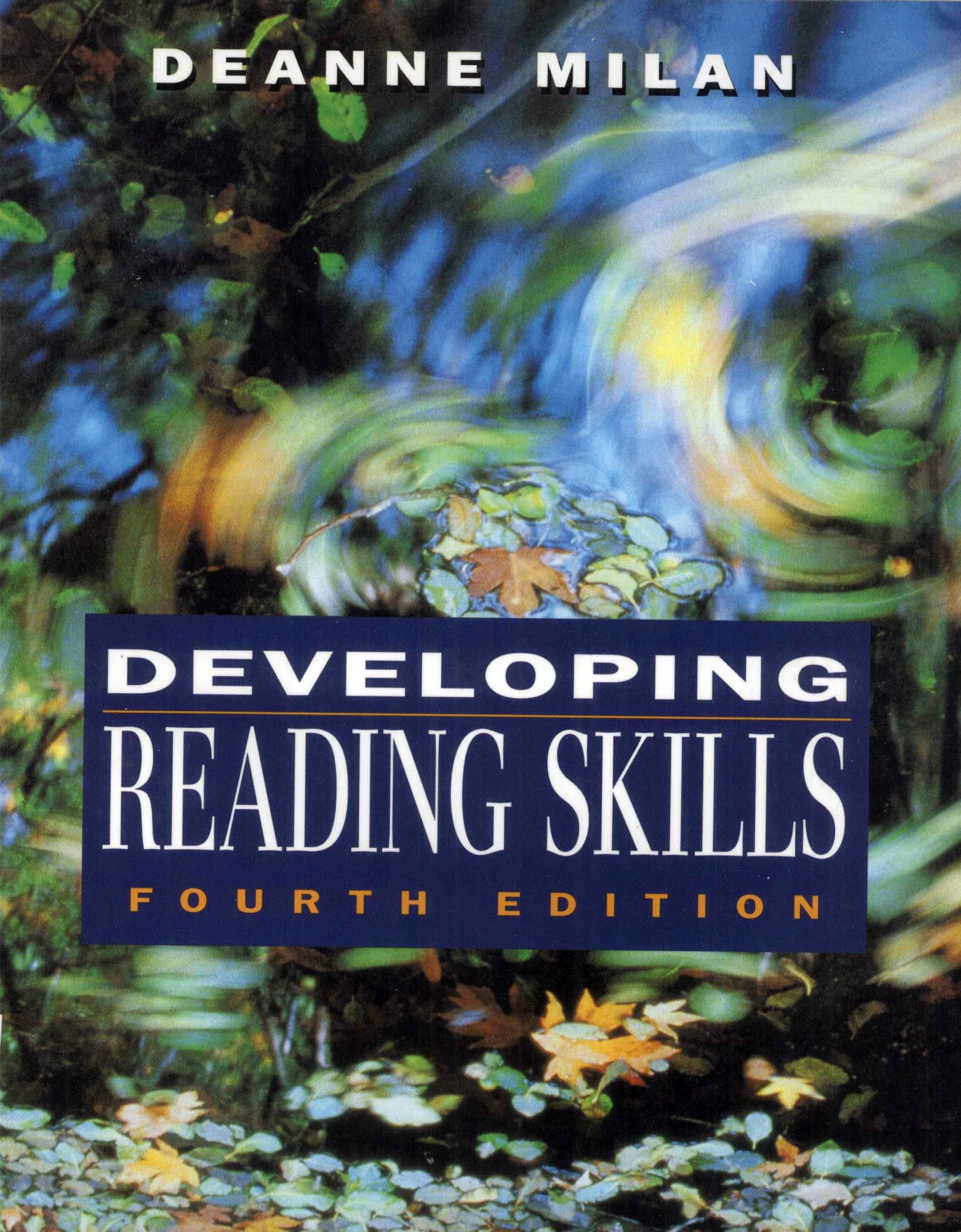




DEANNE MILAN

DEVELOPING

READING SKILLS
FOURTH EDITION

4th

E D I T I O N

Developing Reading Skills

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Deanne Milan

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Developing Reading Skills

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About the Author

After receiving a B.A. and an M.A. in Comparative Literature from the University of Southern California, Deanne Milan worked for a management consultant firm as a junior editor. A few months of delivering mail, typing, and correcting the consultants' grammar convinced her that a business career was not for her. She found a part-time job teaching at Los Angeles Valley College, taught for a while at Rio Hondo Community College, and in 1968 joined the English Department at City College of San Francisco. She has done postgraduate work at San Francisco State University, studying logic, anthropology, and literature. At City College of San Francisco she teaches reading and composition courses. In addition to this text, she is the author of an intermediate reading book, *Improving Reading Skills* (2d ed.), published by McGraw-Hill.

Preface

A fourth edition offers an author the chance to refine, to clarify, to make the book as good as it can possibly be. The fourth edition of *Developing Reading Skills* represents a more extensive revision than the second and third editions. Instructors who have not used the text before will benefit from the many suggestions and responses gathered from our experiences with the first three editions. Instructors who have used earlier editions will find much that is familiar; and while the changes are not radical, I hope they find the text significantly improved in physical layout, in the arrangement of topics, and, most significantly, in the choice of readings. These changes should make the book more useful and appealing to students and instructors alike.

The basic tenet underlying all four editions has remained constant, and this may account for the book's success: Good reading and clear thinking go hand in hand. The text is organized around the principle that students can best improve their reading, first, by intensive, analytical practice with high-quality short reading passages, followed by practice applying these skills to longer and increasingly more challenging essays and articles.

As in the three earlier editions, the reprinted selections represent a variety of topics intended to appeal to students and to general readers alike. I always tell my students at the beginning of the semester that I want them to learn something about the world as they read this book. Accordingly, the topics cover a wide range: anthropology, sports, human behavior, social and political issues, cross-cultural awareness, scientific observation, personal reminiscence, history, the minority experience, education, and so forth. The readings reflect what students can expect to encounter in their college courses and in their daily lives. It makes sense that they learn to read—with ease and confidence—all kinds of material, no matter how abstract or how potentially uninteresting to them, and to read these assignments carefully, critically, and analytically.

Developing analytical skills requires concentration and an intense engagement with the text. Accordingly, *Developing Reading Skills*, like its three predecessors, deliberately does not cover speed techniques. The wisdom of this decision has been borne out as the nation's teachers have become increasingly concerned about the difficulty students

have—at all levels—reading perceptively and thinking critically. This concern is further reflected in the inclusion of critical thinking and reading skills in the nation's elementary and high school curricula and in the increased offering of critical-thinking courses in colleges.

With these concerns in mind and taking into account reviewers' and McGraw-Hill editors' comments, I rethought the book's scheme. Here is what is new in the fourth edition:

- Slightly less than 75 percent of the readings are new, and just under 70 percent were published after 1980. Of the seven practice essays at the end of Chapters 1–7, five are new. Of the fifteen essays in Part IV, eleven are new, as are three of the four short stories in Part V. Both excerpts from textbooks in Part VI are new.
- Approximately 30 percent of the readings are by women or by minority writers.
- The introduction now begins with a discussion of the characteristics of good readers and concludes with a stronger explanation of context clues as a means of developing a good reading vocabulary.
- Part I, “Reading and Analyzing Paragraphs”—includes Chapters 1–4 more or less in their original form; Part II, “Discovering Meaning through Language”—includes Chapters 5–7. Inference skills (in previous editions discussed in the introduction) are now covered in Chapter 5. Chapters 6 and 7 explore language and tone, as before. The progression is more clearly from basic reading skills to more advanced techniques.
- New topics in Chapters 1–7 include a discussion of the way writers write, punctuation and its effect on meaning, special effects, allusion, symbol, and politically correct language. Chapter 5, “Making Accurate Inferences,” begins with simpler, more “obvious” inference questions. Then the student is introduced to other types of inference questions (multiple-choice and fill-in-the blanks).
- The number of exercises following Chapters 1–7 has been reduced to keep the book from becoming too unwieldy, to allow for a more open design, and to give teachers a chance to move more quickly from these fundamental skills to the critical reading, essay, and short story sections.
- Part III, “Reading Critically: Evaluating What You Read”—has been considerably strengthened with new sections on cross-cultural awareness, the concept of a “world view” (including the hazards of ethnocentrism), lying with the facts, and misleading statistics. Part III also offers more extensive coverage than it did in the third edition of evidence, bias, arguments, unstated assumptions, balance, deductive and inductive reasoning, various kinds of emotional appeals, and logical fallacies.
- Part IV, “Reading Essays and Articles”—now includes, besides an explanation of how to read an essay, information on how to write a summary.

Summarizing is an excellent test of both students' comprehension and writing skills. The summary process is demonstrated with Lewis Thomas's persuasive essay, "On the Need for Asylums"; students are shown how an experienced reader and writer annotates with marginal notes. A summary of Thomas's essay follows.

- The instructor's manual retains all the features of the third edition's manual with these additions: suggestions for teaching each long selection in Parts I, II, and IV and topics for short essays for those instructors who like to give writing assignments; a discussion of ways to incorporate collaborative-learning exercises in the classroom; and a list of readings in the text that are especially appropriate for developing cross-cultural awareness.

Within the text's framework, the six sections and the accompanying exercises are directed at improving these specific skills:

- Improving vocabulary, with particular emphasis on using context clues
- Identifying the main idea in a paragraph and the thesis of an essay
- Determining the author's purpose and predominant mode of discourse
- Discerning methods of development, patterns of organization, and logical relationships between ideas
- Making accurate inferences
- Determining the author's tone, including the ability to recognize the many shades and subtleties of irony
- Understanding and analyzing connotative and figurative language
- Distinguishing between fact and opinion, weighing evidence
- Finding unstated assumptions, determining appeals, and evaluating arguments in expository prose and editorials
- Identifying several common logical fallacies

From the comments of students, instructors, and reviewers, the most appealing feature of *Developing Reading Skills* is the quality of the readings. I hope the fourth edition lives up to this reputation. The premise underlying the choice of readings remains the same. Students should practice with first-rate material, not only because good writing is easier to read (by virtue of its clarity), but also because students should not be intimidated by good writing.

Instructors should find their old favorites, but this edition continues to emphasize human-interest reading, with such selections as Rose Del Castillo Guilbault's "Book of Dreams: The Sears Roebuck Catalog"; Perri Klass's amusing look at how she learned medical school lingo in "Learning the Language"; Solomon Northrup's plaintive and bleak eyewitness account of a slave auction; Amy Tan's fond but funny description of her mother's "broken" English in "Mother Tongue"; Richard

Wright's childhood experiences with racial intolerance in "The Ethics of Living Jim Crow"; Malcolm Cowley's wry look at the vices, virtues, and compensations of being an octogenarian in "The View from 80"; Nancy Mitford's "A Bad Time," an account of Scott's disastrous expedition to the South Pole; Diana Hume George's episodic look at Native Americans in "Wounded Chevy at Wounded Knee"; and Stephen Jay Gould's thoughtful essay "Carrie Buck's Daughter," in which he examines the case of a Virginia woman who was involuntarily sterilized.

Short stories are included because they are a good way to get students involved in reading imaginative literature, to sharpen their interpretive skills, and to provide enjoyment for students and instructors alike.

A packet of tests is available for instructors who adopt the fourth edition.

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The following people deserve special thanks for their continuing help: David Spears, Michael Hulbert, Robert Stamps, Don Cunningham, all members of the English Department at City College of San Francisco, and the many people at McGraw-Hill who worked on the book: Laurie PiSierra, Tim Julet, and James R. Belser. Also deserving thanks is Alison Zetterquist, whose support was greatly appreciated.

I would also like to thank the following reviewers for their insightful comments about the third edition, nearly all of which I agreed with and took to heart: Paulette Babner, Cape Cod Community College; Elizabeth Balakian, Fresno City College; Sam Chatham, Long Beach City College; Cherry Conrad, Jackson Community College; Mary Ann DeArmand, San Antonio College; Kathleen Engstrom, Fullerton College; Amy Girone, Glendale Community College; Karen Haas, Manatee Community College; Corin Kagan, Normandale Community College; Betty Murray, St. Petersburg Junior College; Dorothy Scully, Modesto Junior College; Merritt Stark, Henderson State University; and Laurie Stevens, University of St. Thomas.

Deanne Milan

To the Student

A couple of years ago I was shopping with a friend and his twelve-year-old daughter in downtown San Francisco. An older African-American man, a street musician whom my friend happened to know from his own musician days, was playing the tenor saxophone on a streetcorner. His name is Clifford, and he had attracted a crowd with his wonderful performance. After he finished, my friend introduced him to me and his daughter. Clifford asked her if she played an instrument, and when she replied that she was taking trumpet lessons and played in her junior high school band, he said, "That's fine, little lady. Learn your instrument well and you can play anything."

Somehow these simple yet wise words struck me as appropriate not only for a budding trumpet player but also for a reader. If you learn to read well, you can read anything you want—not just the daily newspapers and mass circulation magazines, but more difficult material like philosophy, anthropology, film criticism, military history—whatever interests you as your confidence grows. You would not be limited in any way. Assuming you had the vocabulary—or at least a good dictionary at your side—you could pick up a book, concentrate on it, and make sense of the author's words.

Because in the United States reading instruction often ends at elementary school, students sometimes have difficulty as they progress through school. The reading material gets harder and harder, yet they still must tackle their assignments armed only with their elementary school reading skills. The result, too often, is frustration and loss of confidence. And the assigned reading in your college courses will be even greater than they were in high school—both in content and in the amount of reading assigned. *Developing Reading Skills* is designed to accomplish several tasks: to show you the skills that will enable you to read with greater comprehension and retention, to help you tackle reading assignments with confidence, and to teach you to become an active reader.

Reading is an almost magical process that involves more than merely decoding print. It requires internal translation. In other words, you must internalize the author's words, so that you understand not only their surface meaning but also what the words suggest beyond that. Rather than reading passively, sitting back and letting the author

do all the work, you must learn to interact with the text. When you read, you enter into a peculiar relationship with the writer, a two-way process of communication. Although the writer is physically absent, the words on the page are nonetheless there to be analyzed, interpreted, questioned, perhaps even challenged. In this way, the active reader engages in a kind of silent dialogue with the author.

Along the way, to understand what you read more accurately, you must learn to see relationships between ideas, to determine the author's tone and purpose, to make accurate inferences, to distinguish between fact and opinion, and to detect bias, unstated assumptions, false appeals, logical fallacies, distortions, lack of balance, and the like.

Because the bulk of the reading you must do in college is expository—that is, prose writing that explains, shows, and informs—the readings in this book mostly reflect this kind of writing, although textbook material, editorials, and fiction are included as well. The text will provide you with a variety of engaging readings and many exercises to give you intensive practice in comprehension and analysis. You should take some time to look through the table of contents to become familiar with the book's layout.

As you glance through Parts I and II, you will see that the seven chapters deal extensively with the paragraph, using explanations, illustrative passages, and exercises. At first it may seem odd, or possibly artificial, to devote so much time to single paragraphs, which, after all, are seldom read in isolation. Yet concentrating on short passages promotes careful reading. The paragraph is the basic unit of writing (it is often referred to as the main building block of the essay). Studying its structure closely and examining paragraphs for placement of main idea, methods of development, patterns of organization, inferences, language (especially connotation and figurative language), and tone will help you learn to analyze on a small scale. Certainly it is less intimidating to practice with a hundred-word paragraph than with a five-page essay. Once you become proficient with paragraphs, you can then apply the same skills to longer works.

Entirely too much emphasis has been placed on increasing reading speed, on skimming and scanning, on zooming through material simply to get the “drift” of what the author is saying. These techniques are useful under certain circumstances—for example, for the sports fan who wants to find out which team won, for the student looking through the print or electronic card catalog for likely research sources, or for the reader of “Dear Abby” in the daily newspaper. But they are inappropriate for the major part of the reading you will have to do in college. For this reason, *Developing Reading Skills* does not include a discussion of speed techniques.

One final comment. During the course, as you sharpen your skills, your work should have two results. The first will be an improvement in your own writing. There is much evidence to support the connection

between good reading skills and good writing skills. When you understand how professional writers organize, develop, and support their ideas, you will become more aware of how to deal with your own writing assignments. Second, and more important, you will learn to be a better thinker as well. All of these skills will serve you well for the rest of your life.

Deanne Milan

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