

Crossing Cultures

READINGS FOR COMPOSITION



F O U R T H E D I T I O N

Henry Knepler ~~~~~ Myrna Knepler ~~~~~ Kathleen Kane

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PREFACE

For this fourth edition of *Crossing Cultures* it is no longer necessary to explain why a reader designed for composition classes should deal with cross-cultural and inter-ethnic themes. When the book first made its appearance in the early 1980s, it was the only composition reader of its kind to do so exclusively. Now there are many—a reflection of the realization that the culture of the United States at the end of the twentieth century can best be seen a mosaic—a whole made of many parts.

Using Cross-cultural Themes

The success of this book has established the fact that cross-cultural subjects work well in a composition course. They have a strong impact on students: they challenge accepted beliefs by asking students to consider the lives, ideas, aspirations—and prejudices—of people who are very different from them. At the same time, reading, and having one's classmates read, selections related to one's own culture is likely to heighten students' self-assurance and cause them to reflect on the meaning of their own experience. This reflection and reaction to the readings and class discussion can often be the starting point for writing that "belongs" to the student yet extends beyond his or her own (perhaps limited) experience of the world.

Each selection has been chosen because it is "a good read" whose subject and style will engage college students and provide material for student-student and student-teacher discussions.

Crossing Cultures as a Composition Text

Content that is thematically interesting and challenging is not enough, however, for a reader to be useful in a class whose main goal is the improvement of student writing. *Crossing Cultures* provides many tools to aid in writing development. Arranged thematically, the selections also represent the major patterns of organization usually taught in a writing class. A supplementary Rhetorical Table of Contents points to those patterns.

Each selection, except for the poems, is followed by a set of exercises. "Some Important Words" singles out terms that may not be familiar to students. "Some of the Issues" aids students in careful reading.

“The Way We Are Told” leads them to an examination of the author’s strategies. Each exercise section concludes with “Some Subjects for Writing.” Asterisks indicate questions or writing topics that refer to more than one selection, often giving students the chance to compare and contrast two different views of the same subject.

All editions of *Crossing Cultures* have included headnotes to help the student prepare for reading and to point out other works by the same author. Many of these headnotes have been expanded in the fourth edition. The new *Instructor’s Manual*, in addition to providing sample answers, contains additional background information about the author or setting of the selection.

Organization

Crossing Cultures contains eight thematically organized chapters introducing students to a wide variety of cultures in the United States. Because we need to look at other cultures in order to define our own, one chapter, “Other Worlds,” places its emphasis on cultures elsewhere.

All editions of *Crossing Cultures* have contained selections of varying length and difficulty. Users of previous editions have told us that they appreciate this range and have found suitable material for both less experienced and more sophisticated student readers and writers. In this edition we have made the level of difficulty more transparent. Each of the eight chapters begins with accessible pieces, usually short, often personal and in some cases written by young writers in college or recently out of it. The selections that follow are of increasing complexity. All eight chapters now end with a short story and a poem.

New in the Fourth Edition

Eighteen selections are new to this edition, further extending the cultural range of the book. New pieces include work by Mike Rose (Italian-American), Amy Tan (Chinese-American), Anton Shammas (Palestinian), Sandra Cisneros (Latina) and Eva Hoffman (Polish-American). We have increased the number of women writers to twenty-seven.

A photo essay entitled “Rites of Passage in America” celebrates the diversity of the American experience. Accompanying it are questions designed to develop student visual and critical thinking skills.

Acknowledgments

Several reviewers have given us good advice on choice of selections as well as other features. We thank Donna Hicks, DeVry Institute of Technology; Ane Ipsen, California State University at Fullerton; James MacDonald, University of Southwestern Louisiana; Lori Miller, University of California at Irvine; Carol Serevino, University of Iowa; Donna Thomsen, Johnson and Wales; Bernadette Wikowski, Seton Hall University; Mark Wood, Portland Community College.

Anne Knepler worked long, hard, and skillfully at securing permissions for new and old pieces. Elinor Knepler provided invaluable help throughout the preparation of this edition, particularly during the final stages of editing and proofreading the manuscript. We are grateful for her patience, knowledge, and good judgment.

We want to thank the staff at Macmillan: Chris Migdol and his assistant, Robert Schatz, for finding photos that are both beautiful and appropriate; Bert Yaeger for overseeing the production; Cindy Brant-hoover for careful editing. Michelle Warren, the editorial assistant assigned to the book, was on hand to answer many questions.

Special thanks go to our editor, Barbara Heinssen, whose knowledge, ability, and hard work we have counted upon in this edition as well as previous ones.

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