

READER'S CHOICE

FIRST CANADIAN EDITION



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READER'S CHOICE

*Essays for Thinking,
Reading, and Writing*

FIRST CANADIAN EDITION



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For our Families

PREFACE TO THE INSTRUCTOR

Reader's Choice is based on the assumption that lucid writing follows lucid thinking, whereas poor written work is almost inevitably the product of foggy, irrational thought processes. As a result, our primary purpose in this book, is to help students *think* more clearly and logically—both in their minds and on paper.

Reading and writing are companion activities that involve students in the creation of thought and meaning—either as readers interpreting a text or as writers constructing one. Clear thinking, then, is the pivotal point that joins together these two efforts. Although studying the rhetorical strategies presented in *Reader's Choice* is certainly not the only way to approach writing, it does provide a productive means of helping students improve their abilities to think, read, and write on progressively more sophisticated levels.

The symbiosis we envision among thinking, reading, and writing is represented in this text by the following hierarchy of cognitive levels: (1) *literal*, which is characterized by a basic understanding of words and their meanings, (2) *interpretive*, which displays a knowledge of linear connections between ideas and an ability to make valid inferences based upon those ideas; and (3) *critical*, the highest level, which is distinguished by the systematic investigation of complex ideas, and by the analysis of their relationship to the world around us.

How This Book Is Organized

To help you bring about this improvement in student skills, *Reader's Choice* is organized on the assumption that our mental abilities are generally sequential. In other words, students cannot read or write analytically before they are able to perform well on the literal and interpretive levels. Accordingly, the book progresses from selections that require predominantly literal skills (Description, Narration, and Example) through readings involving more interpretation (Process Analysis, Division/Classification, Comparison/Contrast, and Definition) to essays that demand a high degree of analytical thought (Cause/Effect and Argument/Persuasion). Depending upon the caliber of your students and your prescribed curriculum, these rhetorical modes

can, of course, be studied in any order. In the Rhetorical Contents, each entry includes a one- or two-sentence synopsis of the selections so you can peruse the list quickly and decide which essays to assign. An alternate Interdisciplinary Contents lists selections by academic discipline, thereby responding to recent attempts to integrate reading and writing in content areas other than English through "Writing Across the Curriculum."

The essays in *Reader's Choice* represent a wide range of topics, such as discrimination of all types, ethnic identity, job opportunities, aging, education, sports, women's roles, prison life, time management, apartheid, AIDS, physical handicaps, and the writing process itself. They were selected on the basis of five criteria: (1) high interest level, (2) currency in the field, (3) moderate length, (4) readability, and (5) broad subject variety. Together, they portray the universality of human experience as expressed through the viewpoints of men and women, many different ethnic and racial groups, and a variety of ages and social classes.

Each of the nine rhetorical divisions in the text is introduced by an explanation of how to read and write in that particular rhetorical mode. These explanations are relatively brief so that the pedagogical emphasis in the text falls upon the discoveries students make as they work through the apparatus rather than upon a great deluge of material to be memorized. Each chapter introduction contains a sample paragraph and a complete student essay that illustrate each rhetorical pattern and help bridge the sometimes formidable gap between student and professional writing. After each student essay, the writer has provided a brief note explaining the most enjoyable, exasperating, or noteworthy aspects of writing that particular essay. We have found that this combination of student essays and commentaries makes the professional selections easier for students to read and more accessible as models of thinking and writing. Although each chapter focuses on one particular rhetorical strategy, students are continually encouraged to examine ways in which other modes help support the writers' main intentions.

The book ends with our popular chapter called "Thinking, Reading, and Writing," which includes essays on listening, reading fiction, understanding the process of writing, writing with style, and composing on the computer. Besides representing all the rhetorical modes at work, these essays provide a strong conclusion to the rhetorical framework of this text, which focuses so intently on the interrelationships among thinking, reading, and writing.

Because our own experience suggests that students often produce their best writing when they are personally involved in the topics of the essays they read and in the human drama surrounding those essays, we precede each selection with biographical information on the author and provocative prereading questions on the subject of the essay. The biographies explain the real experiences from which an essay emerges, whereas the prereading questions ("Preparing to Read") help students focus on the purpose, audience, and subject of the essay. These prereading questions also foreshadow the questions and writing assignments after each selection. Personalizing this preliminary material encourages students to identify with both the writer of the essay and the essay's subject matter—which, in turn, engages the students' attention and energizes their response to the selections they read.

The questions at the end of each selection are designed to help students move from various literal-level responses to interpretation and analysis as the topics become progressively more complex. Four different types of questions are appended to each essay: (1) those that test the students' understanding of what they have read on the literal and interpretive levels ("Understanding Details"), (2) those that require students to analyze various aspects of the essay ("Analyzing Meaning"), (3) those that investigate the author's rhetorical strategies ("Discovering Rhetorical Strategies"), and (4) those that supply writing and discussion topics for use inside or outside the classroom ("Ideas for Discussion/Writing"). These questions deliberately examine both the form and content of the essays so that your students can cultivate a similar balance in their own writing.

The writing assignments are preceded by prewriting questions ("Preparing to Write") designed to encourage students to express their feelings, thoughts, observations, and opinions on a certain topic. Questions about their own ideas and experiences help students produce writing that corresponds as closely as possible to the way they think. Then, the writing assignments themselves seek to involve the students in realistic situations by providing a specific purpose and audience for each essay topic. In this manner, student writers are drawn into rhetorical scenes that carefully focus their responses to a variety of questions or problems. The book concludes with a glossary of composition terms and an index of authors and titles.

PREFACE TO THE STUDENT

Accurate thinking is the beginning and fountain of writing.
— Horace

The Purpose of This Text

Have you ever had trouble expressing your thoughts? If so, you're not alone. Many people have this difficulty—especially when they are asked to write their thoughts down.

The good news is that this “ailment” can be cured. We've learned over the years that the more clearly students think about the world around them, the more easily they can express their ideas through written and spoken language. As a result, this textbook intends to improve your writing by helping you think clearly, logically, and critically about important ideas and issues that exist in our world today. You will learn to reason, read, and write about your environment in increasingly complex ways, moving steadily from a simple, literal understanding of topics to interpretation and analysis. Inspired by well-crafted prose models and guided by carefully worded questions, you can actually raise the level of your thinking skills while improving your reading and writing abilities.

Reader's Choice is organized on the assumption that as a college student you should be able to think, read, and write on three increasingly difficult levels: (1) *literal*, which involves a basic understanding of a selection and the ability to repeat or restate the material; (2) *interpretive*, which requires you to make associations and draw inferences from information in your reading; and (3) *analytical*, which demands that you systematically separate, explain, evaluate, and reassemble various important ideas discovered in your reading.

For example, students with a literal grasp of an essay would be able to understand the words on the page, cite details from the selection, and paraphrase certain sections of the essay. Students equipped with interpretive skills will see implicit relationships within a selection (such as comparison/contrast or cause/effect), make inferences from information that is supplied, and comprehend the intricacies of figurative language. Finally, students functioning analytically will be able to summarize and

explain difficult concepts and generate plausible hypotheses from a series of related ideas. In short, this book leads you systematically toward higher levels of thinking and writing.

In order to stimulate your thinking on all levels, this text encourages you to participate in the making of meaning—as both a reader and a writer. As a reader, you have a responsibility to work with the author of each essay to help create sense out of the words on the page; as a writer, you must be conscious enough of your audience that they perceive your intended purpose clearly and precisely through the ideas, opinions, and details that you provide. Because of this unique relationship, we envision reading and writing as companion acts in which writer and reader are partners in the development of meaning.

To demonstrate this vital interrelationship between reader and writer, our text provides you with prose models that are intended to inspire your own thinking and writing. In the introduction to each chapter, we include a student paragraph and a student essay that feature the particular rhetorical strategy under discussion. The essay is highlighted by annotations and by underlining to illustrate how to write that type of essay and to help bridge the gap between student writing in the classroom and the professional selections in the text. After each essay, the student writer has drafted a personal note with some useful advice about generating that particular type of essay. The essays that follow each chapter introduction, selected from a wide variety of well-known contemporary authors, are intended to encourage you to improve your writing through a partnership with some of the best examples of professional prose available today. Just as musicians and athletes richly benefit from studying the techniques of the foremost people in their fields, so do we hope that you will grow in spirit and language use from your collaborative work with the writers in this collection.

How To Use This Text

Reader's Choice contains essays representing the four main purposes of writing: description, narration, exposition, and persuasion. Our primary focus within this framework is on exposition (which means “explanation”), because you will need to master this type of verbal expression to succeed in both the academic and the professional worlds. Although the essays in this text can be read in any order, we begin with description because it is a basic technique that often appears in other forms of discourse.

We then move to narration, or storytelling, and next to the six traditional expository strategies—the established patterns of thought through which most educated people send and receive written ideas and information; example, process analysis, division/classification, comparison/contrast, definition, and cause/effect. The text continues with an expanded chapter on argument and persuasion, including two sets of opposing viewpoint essays. A new Chapter 10 discusses and presents a documented research paper, and the anthology concludes with selections about thinking, reading, and writing.

“Pure” rhetorical types rarely exist, of course, and when they do, the result often seems artificial. Therefore, although each essay in this collection focuses on a single rhetorical mode as its primary strategy, other strategies are also at work in it. These selections concentrate on one primary technique at a time in much the same way a well-arranged photograph highlights a certain visual detail, though many other elements function in the background to make the picture an organic whole.

Each chapter begins with an explanation of a single rhetorical technique. These explanations are divided into four sections that move from the effect of this technique on our daily lives to its integral role in the writing process. The first section, called “Using _____” (for example, “Using Description”), catalogs the use of each rhetorical mode in our daily lives. The second section, “Defining _____” (e.g., “Defining Description”), offers a working definition of the technique and a sample paragraph so that we all have the same fundamental understanding of the term. A third section, called “Reading and Writing _____ Essays” (e.g., “Reading and Writing Descriptive Essays”), explains the processes of reading and writing an essay in each rhetorical mode, and a fourth section presents an annotated student essay showing this particular rhetorical method “at work,” followed by comments from the student writer.

Prior to each reading selection, we have designed some material to focus your attention on a particular writer and topic before you begin reading the essay. This “prereading” segment begins with biographical information about the author and ends with a number of questions to whet your appetite for the essay that follows. This section is intended to help you discover interesting relationships among ideas in your reading and then anticipate various ways of thinking about and analyzing the essay. The prereading questions forecast not only the material in the essay, but also the questions and writing assignments that follow.

The questions following each reading selection are designed as guides for thinking about the essay. These questions are at the heart of the relationship represented in this book among thinking, reading, and writing. They are divided into four interrelated sections that move you smoothly from a literal understanding of what you have just read, to interpretation, and finally to analysis. The first set of questions, "Understanding Details," focuses on the basic facts and opinions in the selection. The second set of questions, "Analyzing Meaning," asks you to explain certain facts and evaluate various assumptions of the essay in an effort to understand the entire selection on an analytical level. The third set of questions, "Discovering Rhetorical Strategies," guides your thinking on how the author achieved certain effects through word choice, sentence structure, organization of ideas, and selection of details. This third series of questions often requires you to apply to your reading of an essay material you learned about a particular mode of writing in the chapter introduction.

The final section of questions consists of three "Ideas for Discussion/Writing." These topics are preceded by "prewriting" questions to help you generate new ideas. Most of the Discussion/Writing topics specify a purpose (a specific reason for writing the essay) and an audience (an identifiable person or group of people you should address in your essay) so that you can focus your work as precisely as possible. These assignments outline realistic scenes and roles for you to play in those scenes so that, as you write, your relationship to your subject and audience will be clear and precise.

The word "essay" (which comes from the Old French *essai*, meaning a "try" or an "attempt") is an appropriate label for these writing assignments, because they all ask you to grapple with an idea or problem and then try to give shape to your conclusions in some effective manner. Such "exercises" can be equated with the development of athletic ability in sports: The essay itself demonstrates that you can put together all the various skills you have learned; it proves that you can actually play the sport. After you have studied the different techniques at work in a reading selection, a specific essay assignment lets you practice them all in unison and allows you to discover for yourself even more secrets about the intricate details of effective communication.

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