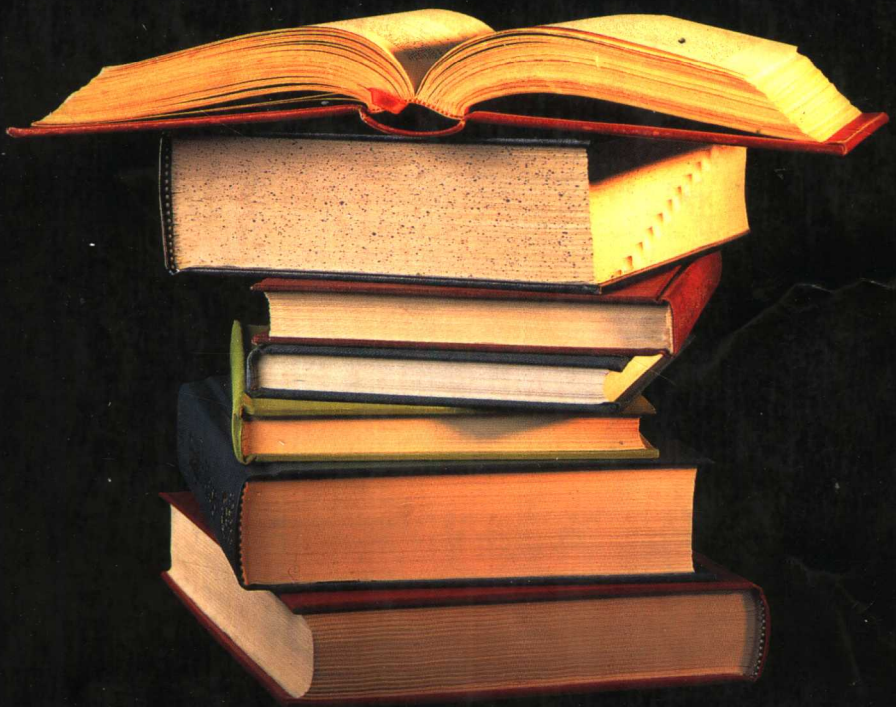
THE BLAIR READER



LAURIE G. KIRSZNER
STEPHEN R. MANDELL

THE BLAIR READER

EDITED BY

LAURIE G. KIRSZNER
Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science

STEPHEN R. MANDELL
Drexel University

A BLAIR PRESS BOOK

PRENTICE HALL, ENGLEWOOD CLIFFS, NJ 07632

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
The Blair reader / edited by Laurie G. Kirszner and Stephen R. Mandell.—Annotated instructor's ed.
p. cm.
"A Blair Press book."
Includes index.
ISBN 0-13-094897-7 (annotated instructor's ed.).—ISBN 0-13-085325-9
1. College readers. 2. English language—Rhetoric. I. Kirszner, Laurie G. II. Mandell, Stephen R.
PE1417.B54 1992
808'.0427—dc20 91-32589
CIP

Cover design: Ben Santora
Cover photo: Garrett Kalleberg
Interior design: Sally Steele
Prepress buyer: Herb Klein
Manufacturing buyer: Patrice Fraccio
Acknowledgments appear on pages 1111–1115, which constitute a continuation of the copyright page.
Blair Press
The Statler Building
20 Park Plaza, Suite 1113
Boston, MA 02116-4399.

Printed in the United States of America
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

ISBN 0-13-085325-9
0-13-094897-7 (Annotated Instructor's Edition)

Prentice-Hall International (UK) Limited, *London*
Prentice-Hall of Australia Pty. Limited, *Sydney*
Prentice-Hall of Canada Inc., *Toronto*
Prentice-Hall Hispanoamericana, S.A., *Mexico*
Prentice-Hall of India Private Limited, *New Delhi*
Prentice-Hall of Japan, Inc., *Tokyo*
Simon & Schuster Asia Pte. Ltd., *Singapore*
Editora Prentice-Hall do Brasil, Ltda., *Rio de Janeiro*

PREFACE

After more than twenty years of teaching composition, we have come to believe that students should view reading and writing as a way of participating in a public discussion about subjects that matter. Being involved in this manner enables students not only to discover their own ideas but also to see how these ideas fit into a larger social context, where ideas gain additional meaning and value. Because we feel so strongly about this view of reading and writing, we decided to create *The Blair Reader*, a reader designed to encourage students to make their own contribution to the public discussion and to help them see that ideas take shape only in response to other ideas.

Another reason we decided to create *The Blair Reader* was that we could not find a reader that actually addressed our needs as teachers. Most readers available to us seemed to include a selection of "classic" essays with a few "relevant" ones mixed in. Some included no questions, no writing suggestions, and no context for teaching the material. Others offered no more than cookie-cutter questions about content, style, and structure. The instructor's manuals that accompanied these texts seemed to us no better. They typically supplied the one "correct" answer to each question and occasionally suggested a possible interpretation of an essay. Regardless of their approach, few readers did much to engage students or instructors.

We—like you—expect (and believe we are entitled to) more than such readers offer. We expect compelling reading selections that engage both instructors and students in a spirited dialogue. We also expect selections that reflect the cultural diversity that characterizes our schools and our society. We expect writers to speak in distinctive voices, to treat issues that concern us deeply, and to use language that challenges and provokes us. In addition, we expect questions that ask not "What does this mean?" but "What does this mean *to you*?" In short, we expect a book that stimulates discussion and

encourages students to see new ideas and to see familiar ideas from new perspectives.

These expectations led us to the decision to assemble a reader that would not push the same old buttons—for us or for our students. This decision did not mean, though, that we wanted to overwhelm instructors with flavor-of-the-month gimmicks masquerading as pedagogy, or readings that were so idiosyncratic as to be unteachable, or apparatus that had the intellectual depth of sound bites. What we wanted was a book that we could sink our teeth into, one that we could use as a resource. We think that this is the book we have created.

The Selections

We began *The Blair Reader* determined that the book would include the readings that composition instructors really enjoyed teaching. To accomplish this goal, we surveyed hundreds of instructors and asked them what essays they thought were the most readable and the most teachable. To their selections we added our favorite contemporary essays, fiction, and poetry. After assembling our table of contents, we had both essays and apparatus class tested by teachers all over the country. The result of this effort is a reader that contains 150 of the most readable and teachable essays, stories, and poems—many by minorities, women, and writers from other cultures. Throughout the text, an "Authors-in-Depth" feature spotlights five distinguished writers—Annie Dillard, Joan Didion, Stephen Jay Gould, George Orwell, and Alice Walker—enabling students to see a single author's range of styles and treatment of a variety of subjects.

We arranged the readings in *The Blair Reader* into twelve large thematic units ("Reading and Writing," "Thinking and Learning," "A Sense of the Past," "Nature and the Environment," "Making Choices," and so on). These broad thematic groupings, representing subjects requested most often by composition instructors, are diverse enough to allow plenty of options yet focused enough for meaningful discussion and writing. In addition, we provided at the back of the book a separate list of topical clusters of readings that focus on the narrower issues. Within these clusters, we included some selections that speak directly to each other (such as John Hope Franklin's response to The Declaration of Independence in "The Moral Legacy of the Founding Fathers") and others that exchange ideas indirectly (such as Norman Cousins's and Joyce Carol Oates's analyses of boxing and Paul Fussell's and Shelby Steele's discussions of class in the United States). Thus the book's flexible organizing scheme provides many options for reading and writing and suggests a variety of alternative perspectives from which to view an issue.

The selections in *The Blair Reader* represent a variety of rhetorical patterns and many different types of discourse. In addition to essays, *The Blair Reader* contains speeches, meditations, journalistic pieces, short stories, and poems. The level of diction ranges from the relaxed formality of E. B. White's "Once More to the Lake" to the biting satire of Marge Piercy's "The Secretary Chant." Every effort has been made, too, to include a wide variety of voices, because we believe that the only way students can discover their own voices is by becoming acquainted with the voices of others.

Resources for Students

We designed the apparatus in *The Blair Reader* to engage students and to encourage them to react to what they read. Their reactions can then become the basis for more focused thinking and writing. In order to facilitate this process, we included the following special features:

- An **Introduction** to the entire book discusses the interactive process of reading and writing that helps students formulate varied and original responses.

- **Chapter Introductions** place each thematic unit in a more immediate social or political context, highlighting a specific idea or issue with which students can connect.

- **"Preparing to Read and Write" Questions** at the end of each chapter introduction help students to sharpen their intellectual and emotional reactions to individual selections in the context of the chapter's larger issues.

- **Headnotes** that accompany each selection provide useful biographical information and often offer insight into the writer's motivation or purpose.

- **"Responding to Reading" Questions** that follow each selection engage students on a personal level so that they have incentive to write about the ideas they have encountered. At the same time, these questions encourage students to respond critically to the material they have read. By asking students to move beyond the level of reading essays simply for facts or information, the "Responding to Reading" questions help them realize that reading is an interactive and intellectually stimulating process and that they have something valuable to contribute.

- **Writing Suggestions** at the end of each chapter ask students to respond in writing to the various ideas they have encountered. These questions encourage students to explore relationships among readings and to connect readings to their own lives.

Resources for Instructors

Because we wanted *The Blair Reader* to be a rich and comprehensive resource for instructors, we developed an **Annotated Instructor's Edition**. This annotated edition, designed to serve as a useful and accessible classroom companion, assembles teaching techniques drawn from our more than twenty years in the classroom; reactions of our own students to the essays, stories, and poems; and approaches to the material developed by Michael Moran and the graduate teaching assistants at the University of Georgia, one of the composition programs in which the book was class tested.

In addition to the full student text, the Annotated Instructor's Edition includes the following features:

- **Confronting the Issues**, an interactive classroom exercise at the beginning of each chapter designed to heighten student awareness of the social and political issues related to the chapter's theme.

- **For Openers**, a provocative strategy for encouraging a dialogue about each selection.

- **Teaching Strategies**, innovative suggestions for eliciting responses to readings and stimulating class discussions.

- **Collaborative Activities**, group activities that enable students to develop insight and understanding by exchanging ideas with others.

- **Background on Readings and Authors**, additional information about the author or the context of a reading.

- **Suggested Answers to Responding to Reading Questions**

- **Additional Responding to Reading Questions**, alternate questions for those instructors who want more editorial apparatus than the book includes.

- **Writing Suggestions**, engaging writing topics for every essay, story, and poem in the book.

We encourage you to use the Annotated Instructor's Edition to complement your own proven strategies. We also encourage you to let us know your reactions to the Annotated Instructor's Edition and your suggestions for making it better. We are especially interested in hearing about classroom strategies that you use successfully and reading selections that have consistently appealed to your students. In future editions of the Annotated Instructor's Edition, we would like to include these suggestions along with the names of the individuals who submitted them. Just write us in care of Blair Press (The Statler Building, 20 Park Plaza, Suite 1113, Boston, MA 02116), and we will personally respond to your letters.

Acknowledgments

The Blair Reader is the result of a fruitful collaboration between the two of us, between us and our students, between us and Blair Press, and between us and you—our colleagues who told us what you wanted in a reader. Because we worked so closely with so many generous people, we have a long list of thank yous.

First, we wish to express our gratitude to Nancy Perry for doing her usual thorough, professional job—and for somehow always managing to see both the forest and the trees. Also at Blair Press, we want to thank Leslie "grace under pressure" Arndt, who always knew where everything was. At Prentice Hall, we thank Phil Miller and Kate Morgan for their support for the project and Ann Knitel for coordinating the Annotated Instructor's Edition. We are especially grateful for the contributions of Michael Moran, Director of Composition at the University of Georgia, and his graduate teaching assistants—Robert Croft, Suzanne Gilbert, Russell Greer, Karen Radford, and Kristine Sieloff—which helped make the Annotated Instructor's Edition the rich collection of resources that it is. We also appreciate the organizational skills of Geraldine McGowan of Editorial Services of New England, who guided the book through production. Finally, we would like once again to thank the reference and interlibrary loan staff at the Joseph W. England Library of the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science—particularly Leslie Bowman, Sue Brizuela, Susan Joseph, Kathleen Smith, Carol Tang, and Robert Woodley—

for their patience and imagination in tracking down readings and information for headnotes and footnotes.

In creating *The Blair Reader*, we benefited at every stage from the assistance and suggestions of colleagues from across the country. We extend our thanks to the hundreds of instructors who responded to our original survey. Space does not permit us to list them all by name, but we are nonetheless grateful for their advice. We would like to thank, too, the many instructors who reviewed the manuscript or tried out chapters in their classrooms: Lynn Dianne Beene, University of New Mexico; Robinson Blann, Trevecca Nazarene College; Lisa Cohen, University of Georgia; Patricia E. Connors, Memphis State University; George A. Cox, North Carolina State University; Dawn Daemon, North Carolina State University; Robert W. Funk, Eastern Illinois University; Lauren M. Jones, North Carolina State University; Frank Kelley, University of Houston—University Park; Michelle LeBeau, University of New Mexico; Janet Madden-Simpson, El Camino College; Robert Mayberry, University of Nevada—Las Vegas; Ruth Meyers, Wichita State University; Susan J. Miller, Santa Fe Community College; Betty Mitchell, Southern Illinois University; Michael G. Moran, University of Georgia; Robert G. Noreen, California State University—Northridge; Kathleen O'Fallon, Butler University; Edward A. Shannon, North Carolina State University; Kathleen Shannon, North Carolina State University; Agatha Taormina, Northern Virginia Community College; Ronald Tranquilla, Saint Vincent College; Elizabeth Ruth Webb, Memphis State University; Lana White, West Texas State University; William F. Woods, Wichita State University; and William Young, Lynchburg College. *The Blair Reader* is a better book because of their contributions.

On the home front, we once again round up the usual suspects to thank—Mark, Adam, and Rebecca Kirszner and Demi, David, and Sarah Mandell. And, of course, we thank each other: It really has been "a beautiful friendship."

Laurie G. Kirszner
Stephen R. Mandell

CONTENTS

♦ AUTHOR IN DEPTH

INTRODUCTION TO READING AND WRITING

READING TEXTS

In some ways being in college is like visiting a country that you have never seen before. You make new, interesting observations, and, if you are lucky, you even make some unexpected and exciting discoveries. Throughout your years at college you are exposed to new worlds of ideas—some from conversations with your friends, others from instructors, but most from the books and articles you read. In spite of predictions to the contrary, reading has not been overwhelmed by new technologies like computers, laser disks, and digital tape. In fact, it seems to be alive and well in American colleges and universities. It is safe to say, therefore, that, without reading, much of what we call education simply would not take place.

Reading is an activity that seems simple enough. After all, you have been doing it for years. Even so, it makes sense to examine what many students mean when they say they are going to "read." Much of the reading they do is assigned. For example, students will be asked to read a chapter of a textbook written by an expert in a particular field of study. Typically, they will approach such texts by looking for the writer's main ideas. Once they figure out what the writer is trying to say, they may mark key passages in the text or even jot down a few notes. Whether the text is concerned with modern American poetry, principles of corporate management, or quantum mechanics, the students' goal is the same: to search for specific information.

In addition to reading textbooks, students also read essays, fiction, and poetry. These forms present their own challenges. With these, you read not just to acquire information but also to discover your own ideas about the text: what it means to you, how you react

to it, why you react as you do, and how your reactions differ from the responses of other readers.

When you read a textbook, you assume its ideas will be accessible, free of ambiguity, and easily retrievable. If the book is clearly written and organized, these expectations will be met. But reading essays, fiction, and poetry is not usually this straightforward. Because these have no one true "meaning," your role as a reader must be more active than it is when you read a textbook. Even so, the difference between textbooks and essays, fiction, and poetry is primarily one of degree. All texts—that is, all of the things you read—are open to interpretation.

Like many readers, you may assume that the meaning of a text is hidden somewhere between the lines and that if you only ask the right questions or unearth the appropriate clues, you will be able to discover exactly what the writer is getting at. But reading is not a game of hide-and-seek in which you must find ideas that have been hidden by the writer. This way of thinking incorrectly assumes that the author is in complete control of the words on the page and that the only "correct" meaning of a text is the one that the author intended. It also assumes that there *is* only one "correct meaning." As current reading theory demonstrates, this model oversimplifies the reading process by failing to recognize the complex interaction that takes place between a reader and a text.

READING AND MEANING

Current models of reading hold that meaning is not contained within a text but is rather created by the interaction of a reader with a text. In other words, readers *actively* create meanings as they read. The easiest way to explain this concept is to draw an analogy between a text and an individual word. A word is not the natural equivalent of the thing it signifies. *Dog*, for example, does not call forth the image of a furry, four-legged animal in all parts of the world. In Spain the word *perro* has the same power to elicit a mental picture as *dog* does in English-speaking countries. Not only does the word *dog* have meaning only in a specific cultural context, but it also evokes different images in different people. Some people may picture a collie, others a poodle, and still others a specific dog that they owned when they were children. Moreover, in some cultural contexts a word from another culture may have no equivalent. How, for example, can you translate *simpatico* from Spanish into English? Loosely speaking, the